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SAM HURD

page 10

Issue 170:

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Welcome

WELCOME TO OUR latest issue, which is our annual edition with a wedding flavour to celebrate the start of the season. You'll find plenty of wedding-related features inside, including a Portfolio from renowned photographer Sam Hurd, the 'game changer' shots from Lisa Devlin's selection of international wedding legends and a guide to some of the best presentational products that will showcase your work and potentially earn you some useful additional profit.

However, there's really only one topic on everyone's minds at the moment, and the Coronavirus pandemic is escalating at terrifying speed as I write this. My thoughts are with anyone who has suffered through themselves or their loved ones contracting this virus or who has had their working lives ripped to shreds inside days by the fall out as the country takes the steps necessary to fight this.

As a small business owner myself I completely understand the worry and financial implications so many are facing at this testing time, and I wish you all well and sincerely hope that every one of you, both physically and as a business, is still standing once this has blown through, which it will do at some point. Check out the Professional Photo website for the latest updates and stay safe and well.

TERRY HOPE
EDITOR
terry@professionalphoto.online

ON THE COVER

Wedding photographers Jim and Vicky Pollard shot this memorable image in New Zealand and are amongst the influencers Lisa Devlin nominates in her personal list on Page 36.

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It's Carolyn Mendelsohn's turn to advise her younger self.

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Fine Photographica
28 April

A fine Lancaster Stereoscopic Camera from The Godfrey Batting Collection

The auction includes fascinating cameras and equipment from The Godfrey Batting Collection – he was from a family of chemists in Tunbridge Wells and a keen photographer, whose collection was formed in the early 20th Century. His family were friends with Henry Peach Robinson, whose 1860s Thomas Peele wet-plate studio camera will be included in the sale.

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UPFRONT

NEWS / VIEWS / EVENTS / EXHIBITIONS / NEW GEAR

WORDS TERRY HOPE

CAMPAIGN

EXCLUDED FROM NO 10?

Boris Johnson signs the Withdrawal Agreement.

PICTURE: ANDREW PARSONS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS and agencies are up in arms over what they see as an effective ban on access to Prime Minister Boris Johnson at potentially historic moments in favour of carefully selected images that have been shot and distributed by an official personal snapper.

It's been a long established tradition that two photographers would normally be given access to attend special occasions at No 10 on a rota basis, with one being from national or regional newspapers via the News Media Association and one from an agency via the Wire Photo Association, with the content being pooled for all to use.

However, on two recent occasions – Johnson signing the historic Withdrawal Agreement on January 24 and then a few weeks later symbolically banging a gong at the moment the UK officially left the EU – the national press was not invited to attend and instead photographer Andrew Parsons, co-founder of the i-Images Photo Agency and a man who has recently been appointed as a special adviser to Johnson, was the only one there to record the occasion.

Parsons has had a long association with Downing Street, having documented first David Cameron, then Theresa May and now Johnson since 2005, and he was briefly Cameron's personal photographer in 2010 but left after the then PM was accused of employing 'vanity staff.' With regard to the two Brexit-related events at No 10, Parsons' images were distributed via image sharing site Flickr for use with a credit under Creative Commons.

Alan Sparrow, a former picture editor on the Guardian and Metro newspapers, who is chair of the UK Picture Editors' Guild, used the occasion of the recent annual UKPEG Annual Awards to raise the matter publically and to ask for an assurance from the PM that the perceived ban would be lifted.

" The Guild's fears are that it is the thin edge of the wedge," he told PP. "We were seeking a guarantee that we would always have access to the Prime Minister, but as yet No 10 has refused to respond. I am sure that No 10 could argue that, by making the images available on Flickr, the images are available to a wider audience. The Guild's position is these images are the 'approved Downing Street image' and that it would be better if the pictures were taken by news organisations who provide the images without political bias."

The UKPEG Awards themselves, presented in association with long standing partner Shutterstock, were handed out at a glittering and well attended event at the Honourable Artillery company HQ in City Road, London, and saw Toby Melville from Reuters named Shutterstock Press Photographer of the Year after claiming a clutch of awards in three separate categories. Chairman's Lifetime Achievement accolades were also awarded to veteran photojournalist Marilyn Stafford for her contribution to photography over several decades and posthumously to Terry O'Neill CBE.

Head to the Professional Photo website for a full round up of the results and a chance to see a selection of the amazing winning images.

/ **www.pictureeditorsguildawards.co.uk**

TRADE SHOWS

NEW DATE FOR THE PHOTO SHOW

FOLLOWING ITS POSTPONEMENT from mid-March The Photo Show has been re-scheduled to take place at the NEC from September 19-22. Those who ordered tickets for the original dates will still be able to use them in September while Masterclass tickets are also being transferred unless a refund has been requested.

Meanwhile another casualty of the trade show cancellations taking place at the moment is photokina, which was due to be held from May 27-30 in Cologne. In this case it's the second postponement for this once giant international event, which was originally set to have moved to a new annual format last May. Taking a long term view, the date for the next photokina event has been set for two years' time, so if you want to make a note in your diary it will now be running from May 18-21 2022.

/ **www.thephotographyshow.com**

AWARD

AMAZING INTERNET WINS AGAIN

Website designer Amazing Internet, which specialises in products for photographers, artists and other creatives, has won the title of 'Best Photo Website Provider' from Photography News for the second year running. "This award was particularly gratifying to receive since it's voted on by readers of the title," says director Andrew Skirrow. "For us it's very much business as usual at the moment and we're anticipating plenty of activity in the coming months as ecommerce becomes an ever more important part of everyone's thinking."

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LAUNCH

FUJIFILM LAUNCHES THE X-T4

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THE LATEST HIGH END APS-C model to be launched by Fujifilm is the X-T4, said to be a sister to the X-T3 rather than its replacement, and the older sibling will remain in the market at a promotional price of £1199 body only. Key features of the new model, which will retail at £1549 body only or £1899 with the 18-55mm or £1949 with the 16-80mm, include a 26MP sensor, 20fps shooting speed and 4K video capture up to 60p. There is also in-body image stabilisation, or IBIS, with a sensor that moves to compensate for camera movement, offering up to 6.5 stops of extra stability.

The camera also features a 3in vari-angle touch-screen, a new shutter unit with 15fps continuous shooting using the mechanical shutter and there is a new, larger battery for extended battery life, said to extend to 500 shots or 600 with economy mode switched on. The new camera uses the same 26mp X-Trans BSI CMOS sensor as the Fujifilm X-T3, as well as the same image processor. The electronic viewfinder is also the same, with 3.69million dots, and 0.75x magnification, although there's a new eye-cup surround and there are additional boost options designed to give quicker refresh rates.

The three main improvements offered by the X-T4 are a new film simulation effect, 'bleach bypass,' which is designed to give a cinematic look with harder tonality and less colour saturation, new AF algorithms with focus speeds as high as 0.02s and vastly improved movie functionality. There's now a new photo/video switch located on top of the camera body, while features such as FullHD video at 240fps for 10x slow motion, digital IS mode, IS boost mode, still/movie independent menus and a backup recording facility in 4K to both UHS-II SD card slots have also been added.

/ www.fujifilm.eu/uk

LAUNCH

URBAN STYLE FROM MANFROTTO

MANFROTTO'S NEW CHICAGO collection consists of two multi-purpose, modular system photography backpacks, available in Medium and Small sizes, which are devised to fulfil the needs of city-based photographers and filmmakers. Both backpacks feature a removable photo insert that enables a switch from 100% photography to 100% lifestyle in an instant. The backpacks can hold a full-frame mirrorless or DSLR camera with standard zoom lens attached. On top of this, the Medium holds 3-4 extra lenses, whereas the Small fits 2-3 additional lenses, depending on size.

Both models have a top compartment designed for personal gear, and they can also fit a DJI Osmo Mobile in a dedicated gimbal pocket on one of the double-sided flaps. Moreover, the Chicago Medium also features a media organiser pouch designed to keep essential media accessories, such as SD cards, cables and adapters, close to hand.

Meanwhile a separate laptop compartment on the back of the packs' main compartments can store a 14in laptop in the Small and a 15in laptop in the Medium. There's also a versatile tripod holder included, which is designed to hold a tripod horizontally across the front or under the pack, or vertically on the front of the pack. Slip anything you need easy access to into the double-sided external stretch pockets on both sides.

The Manfrotto Chicago camera backpack small is available for £182.95, with the medium version at £213.45.

/ www.manfrotto.co.uk

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PROFILE

HOME FROM HOME!

CVP's showroom in London's Fitzrovia district feels distinctly homely, which turns out to be entirely intentional and totally in tune with the welcoming ethos of this remarkable facility.

LEFT: Sales Director Jon Fry is proud of CVP's welcoming ethos.

IT WAS COLD and the rain was driving down outside, but as you step into the reception of CVP's showroom in London's Newman Street, just down the road from the Telecom Tower, it's like walking into a friend's cosy living room. There's a fire blazing in the hearth, comfy sofas and you're welcome to make yourself a cup of real coffee (no granules here) while you shelter from the outside world.

If it feels homely that's because this was actually once someone's home, and the five-storey building still has the feel and the layout of a rather genteel Edwardian residence, albeit one that's been subtly adapted in recent times to serve as a setting for a selection of cutting edge pro-spec products that are aimed at those looking to undertake video production, right the way through from an entry-level commercial film for a local business to a high-end full-on feature.

Leading the tour today is sales director Jon Fry, a director of the company and a man whose pride and passion for the business can't help but shine through. This beautiful house has been the company's base for the past year-and-a-half and the aim from the outset has been to throw open the doors and welcome all-comers. There's categorically no such thing as a hard sell here – there is a sales team of course, but they're kept out of sight, tucked away in the basement – and the first person you'll meet when you turn up will be someone highly knowledgeable with a background in the business, whose job it is to talk through your requirements and to come up with a solution that's based on your needs, not the size of your wallet. Only if you then subsequently decide on a purchase – and very often that point might not be reached – will you meet the team that will take your money.

Jon is aware that many of those who have only ever worked as stills photographers might not have encountered his company just yet, but times are changing fast and he knows that his audience is constantly evolving. "Even just a few years ago I wouldn't have been expecting to talk to many photographers because they simply weren't our primary audience," he says. "However, this has all changed since so many of them are now looking at adding film production to their businesses and we're relishing the chance to work with them."

ABOVE: It looks like home because it used to be one, and CVP offers a vast array of gear for comparison purposes, including a selection of field monitors.

And there's no need at all to feel awkward about walking through the door, even if your working knowledge of film production is minimal right now. There's no presumption on CVP's part that you'll have any experience, and they're more than happy to talk you through the whole process from ground zero if necessary and to advise on the best way to go.

"A lot of those who come to us might well be here for a while talking things through and then leave without buying anything," remarks Jon. "And that's fine. There's no pressure put on to

ABOVE: The CVP base in Fitzrovia is host to regular workshops, such as this introduction event for the Canon C500 Mark II.

purchase anything and a lot of the time people want to think about things before committing. Some might consider that's a slightly dangerous thing for us to do because someone could then simply shop for what they need online, but the fact is that our online prices are very competitive in any case and what we're looking for is the longer term relationship, where there's trust involved and customers know they won't be sold something they don't need."

EASING IN

You won't find that you're being overwhelmed by technology either since, while CVP is very well placed to deal with both the mid and high end of the market and does a huge amount of business in these areas, it's equally happy to talk through the virtues of models such as Sony's a7 line-up and the Panasonic GH series, cameras that stills photographers will already be fully familiar with. Advice can be given about accessorising even the most affordable hybrid kit and making it fit for professional service and this entry level filmmaking sector – albeit one that's aimed at professionals - is becoming an increasingly important part of the operation.

"One of the key things about our business is the fact that we're one of the very few around that are completely equipment agnostic," says Jon, "so we won't try to sell you one brand over another. We also operate a thriving used equipment side, so you could start off buying something second hand to ease yourself into the filmmaking side and then we'll let you trade up as you become more experienced so that you can grow at the pace that suits you without finding yourself having to sell on gear you no longer use.

"We're more than happy to let you come here and work with the equipment you're interested in, to shoot footage with it and then to edit it in the BlackMagic suite we have on our top floor and view the results on our big screen to see exactly what it's capable of. It's all under one roof and, again, there's no obligation involved at the end of the process."

ABOVE: Upstairs in the facility is a BlackMagic editing suite so that visitors can put together test films on the spot.

While not affiliated with any particular brand, CVP does have a room on the second floor that's full of Canon kit and another a floor further up – there are lots of stairs in this place! – that's dedicated to Sony, with a wall of Zeiss lenses and another made up of field monitors. The reasoning is simple: these are brands that are at the heart of the filmmaking business and those looking to work with this kit can simply come along and try out pretty much everything under one roof. There would simply be no other facility where this option was available. Manufacturers can also run events here, with Canon on this occasion demonstrating its latest C500 Mark II to an interested audience.

This brings us on to another point, namely education, and CVP is at the forefront of this. Just a cursory look through what's on offer reveals such events as a workshop covering the Blackmagic PCC 4K and 6K, a presentation by Ian Murray on his move from image creation into cinematography and news about a CVP northern roadshow being undertaken in conjunction with Canon and Sony. This is a company that believes in putting something back and most of the events are available for a nominal charge.

So, the open invitation is there to head along and to see for yourself what CVP has to offer. You don't need to book ahead, the location is superbly central and the atmosphere delightfully informal. You'll feel right at home whatever level you might happen to be at and rest assured there's a welcoming cup of coffee with your name on it just waiting behind that grand front door.

More information:
/ **www.cvp.com**

Magic Moments

Although he never set out to become a wedding photographer Sam Hurd has made this specialisation his own and is in huge demand for his special brand of alternative imagery.

WORDS TERRY HOPE **IMAGES** SAM HURD

RIGHT: Photographer Sam Hurd enjoys the challenge of producing eye-catching portraits of both wedding subjects and even himself.

THIS SPREAD: While Sam's approach is unconventional he puts the client first and always makes sure they get the shots they need to remember their wedding by.

SOMETIMES JUST A few words can sum up an individual's whole approach to their craft and, indeed, their life. In wedding photographer Sam Hurd's case these can be found proudly displayed on the home page of his website: 'I'm Fascinated by the Magic of Photography.' And looking through his galleries this is a statement that's borne out time after time, as you encounter work that not only serves to document the biggest day in a couple's life but also goes way beyond mere reportage and creates something lasting and special, startling and unexpected imagery that's totally unique to those people and their individual occasion.

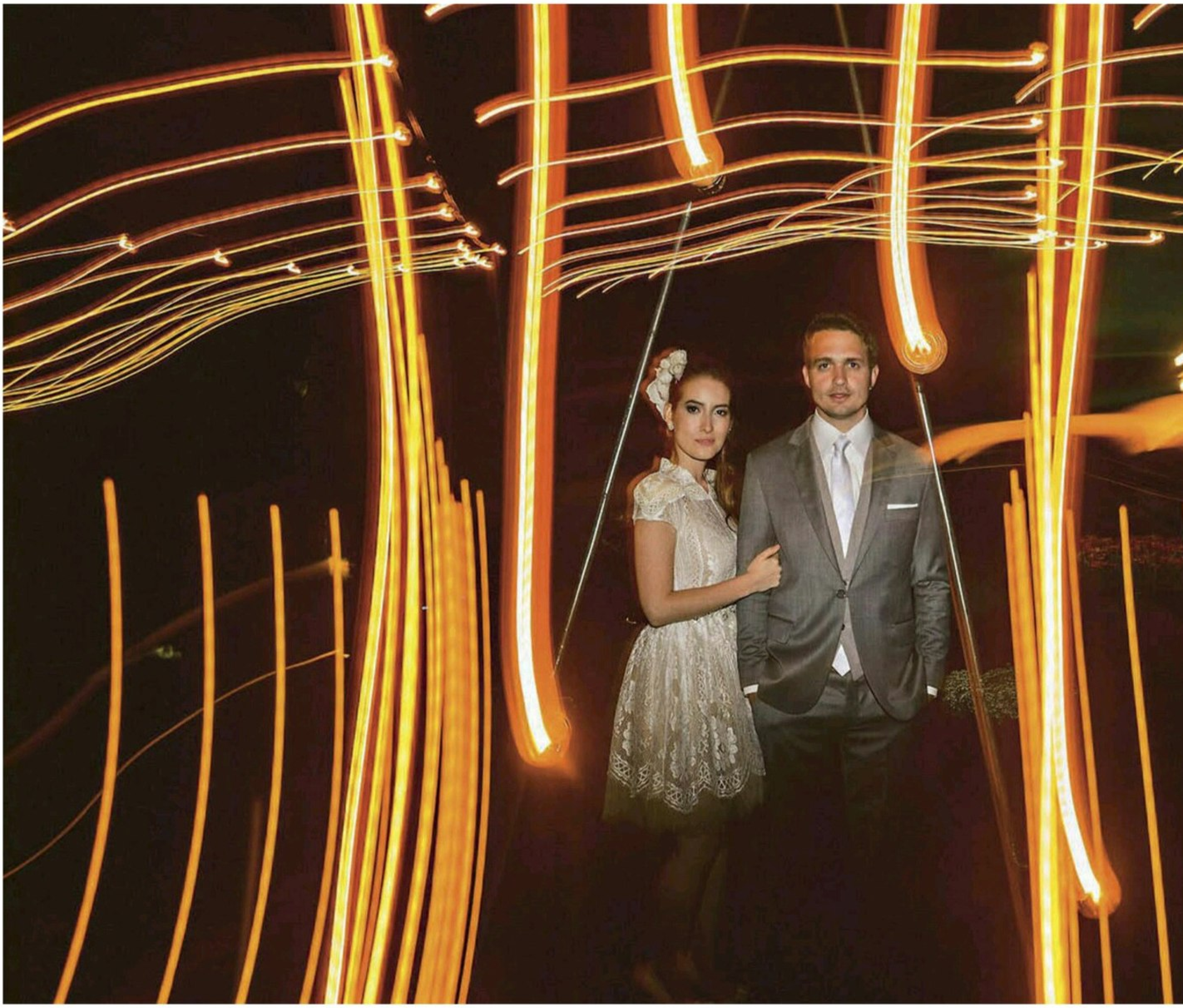
It's one of the reasons why Washington DC based Sam has a following that goes way beyond his immediate vicinity and why he's in demand to cover weddings all around the globe, while his workshops – his most recent being the Thrive 2020 event hosted by Photography Farm in Brighton and Glasgow – tend to be sell outs that attract those that are looking for a little inspiration to lift them above the ordinary.

Curiously enough, and in common with so many others who are held in such high esteem in the world of wedding photography, Sam never set out to work in this area and he only arrived here through a process of self-discovery, a generous slice of good fortune and a realisation that, actually, pictures of a couple making their vows didn't have to be staid and formulaic and, well, just a tad boring. Instead weddings could actually be fun and lively and different and special and could be captured by inventive imagery that often had more than a touch of the surreal about it.

"During my last semester of college I was applying for jobs primarily via Craigslist, a US classified advertisements website that carries details of vacancies," he recalls. "I was primarily searching for IT/Computer Science related positions but while I was looking I happened to stumble across a posting that included taking on the photography for an organisation called the National Press Club in Washington DC, located just a couple of blocks from the White House. They wanted to have an in-house photographer to sell as an option for client press conferences and news making events. I went for an interview and was hired to work there full time and develop their photography program from scratch."

It was a dream position in so many ways, being a rare opportunity to work as a salaried photographer but also, alongside the more run-of-the-mill everyday jobs, such as shooting press conferences, speakers at the podium and 'grip and grins,' he also found himself with a certain amount of downtime behind the scenes as celebrities waited their turn to address the press. Typically it would just be Sam, the VIP and their handler waiting around and, in the ten minutes or so that was available, he would ask to set up and shoot a portrait to provide the archive of the press club with a different kind of historical record of the occasion.

So it was that, so early in his photographic career, Sam found himself shooting subjects as />



ABOVE: The inventiveness of Sam's approach - here using moving lights to create a pattern around the couple - reflects the fact that he sees no set rules he has to follow in wedding photography.

internationally renowned as George Clooney, Denzel Washington, Michael Phelps and Alex Baldwin and, in an act of creative bravery, to be echoed later on in his wedding career, he decided to do it in a way that was both crazy and difficult, but ultimately had the potential to pay huge dividends.

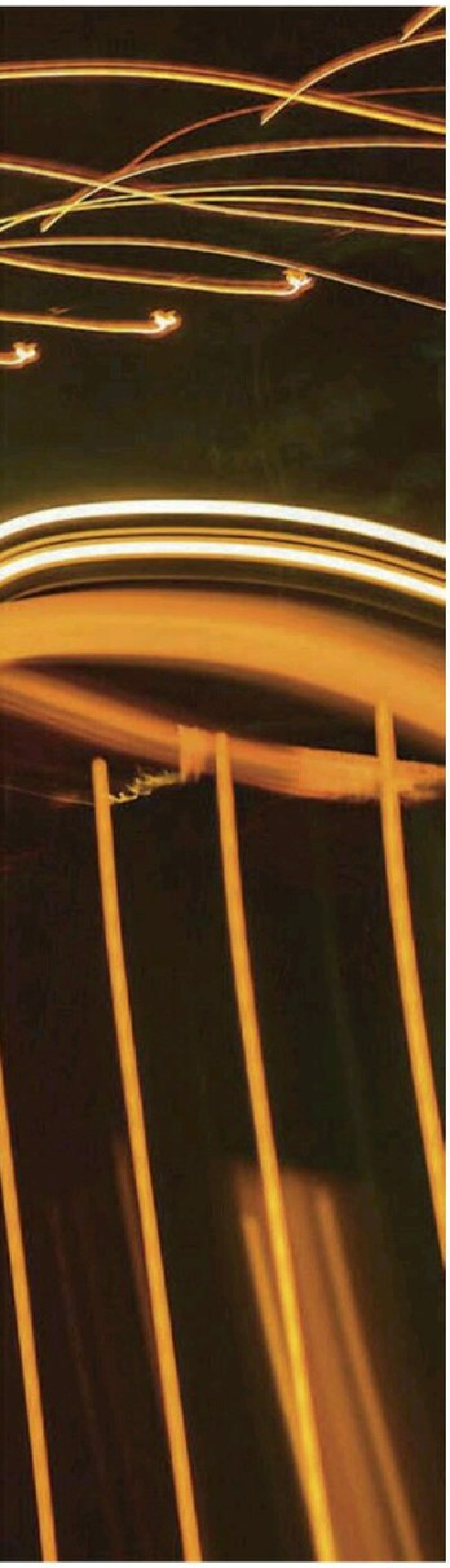
"I photographed my first subject, who was a successful local man who owned the hockey club and a few other sports teams, and I only took around sixty seconds over it, a panorama with multiple studio strobes, and it was crazy. After that worked out well I realised I could probably get away with any approach that I wanted to do, and I would just be trusted to come away with something."

Moving Sideward

That process of taking a risk and being rewarded with something that, while different, still worked on both a commercial and creative level, typifies Sam's approach to photography and it's one that he's carried with him as his career has grown. And, after starting out as a hobbyist shooting nature and landscape photos, he very much found his niche when he turned his camera on people, and portraiture of all kinds is his abiding and overriding love now.

"I worked as the staff photographer at the NPC for six years full time – these days I'm just managing it on the side – and about three years into my time there I was asked to photograph a co-worker's wedding and that was my first ever experience of this kind of work. I fell in love with the creative latitude of wedding photography vs press events and quickly ramped up my own wedding photography business.

"I've now been shooting weddings full time for about eight years and was lucky to start shooting at a time when there was a clear shift in this genre. It now wasn't just something you did 'to pay the bills' but a job that photographers actually aspired to do full time. I had the luxury of a salaried photography position at the NPC if the wedding stuff didn't work



out so I leaned into curating my portfolio exactly how I wanted it to be from the very beginning. I show a highly disproportionate amount of weird/creative photos that hardly have anything to do with the wedding day in my portfolio. That's something that inevitably turns a lot of people off - so it is risky - but it's ended up attracting the perfect clients for me and now, lo and behold, there's more than enough for me to make a great living from!"

It took bravery and a goodly amount of self-belief for that approach to work, but it is a fact that if photographers show nothing but the work they want to take on they will naturally avoid the jobs that don't interest or motivate them while hopefully cultivating a following amongst those that 'get' what they're trying to do. In Sam's case he's still acutely aware of the need to provide a lasting and high quality record of the wedding day, but he's gravitated towards those that enjoy his strictly non-traditional look and these are exactly the kinds of clients who are prepared to give time and cooperation on the day to collaborate on images that stand out from the crowd.

"People tend to just trust me to do my thing," says Sam, "but I do a little prep work with a questionnaire that I send out a month beforehand and a few other planning tips that I've written up. I used to meet everyone for coffee but in the last two to three years I've found most people are happy with FaceTime, Skype or a phone call. I try not to control things too much. If every wedding went exactly as I wanted or planned then that would slowly lead me down a path of predictability and stagnation. I want variety, surprises and problem solving because those are the elements that lead to creative renewal."

Naturally there will always be restrictions and a certain amount of playing things by ear on the typical wedding day, and Sam is only too aware that even the most creatively minded of couples will naturally want to spend time with their guests rather than turn the entire occasion into one big photo shoot. It's intriguing, however, to see how many of his shots look as though they must have taken an age to conceive and set up, so how does he square the circle and come up with standout shots without ending up imposing himself too heavily on the day?

"I work completely improvised," he says. "I am hyper aware of people's personality quirks. If someone makes a funny quip, or comes up with a />

APRI
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INTESO

TOP: As simple a technique as a double exposure can be used by Sam to create a shot that's oustandingly different.

ABOVE RIGHT: Sometimes the difference is created by clever and bold framing and differential focus.

RIGHT: Sam's inventive eye enables him to visualise elements in a scene, in focus or out, that can be used to great creative effect.

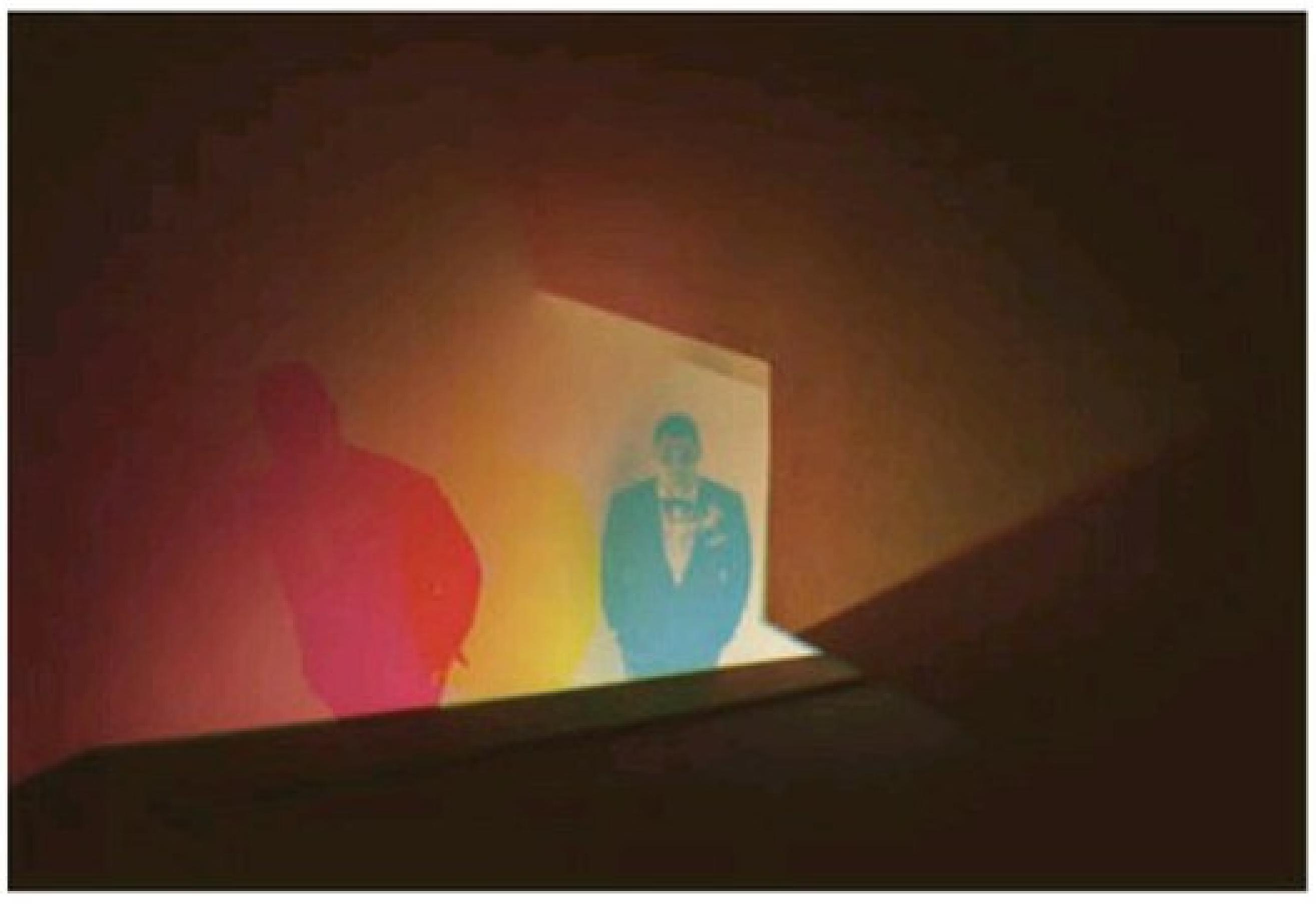
gesture I hook into that and encourage more of it. Even if it's a bit cheesy to begin with it might often lead to something that's not.

"As the day unfolds I seize opportunities when appropriate, but otherwise my role is to just sit back and document without any intervention. Couple portraits on the day are very directed and controlled, but are still only created with iterations of 'trying stuff' out that I'm curious about. I usually have most couples for about 20 mins for their portrait session, so I try not to be over demanding.

"I also primarily shoot by myself, probably 90% of the time. I only show sample galleries of weddings that I've shot entirely by myself and I only show my photos on my blog/portfolio/social media. I don't find it a problem to shoot by myself and honestly I just want to be as affordable for clients as possible, so I'm not interested in upselling a second shooter to someone unless there's a good reason for it."

While his photography may be unconventional, Sam also has very distinct views on presentation and it might surprise some to discover that he's not heavily into providing the products that some tap into with a view to increasing their profit margins. For Sam it's much more about the buzz of shooting and flexing his creative muscles and once the final frame has been created on the day he's then ready to move on to the next big event in his diary.

"I'm a big believer in keeping my business ultra-efficient," he says. "In my first few years I thought I needed all the fancy albums, slideshows set to music, letter pressed pricing guide, business cards and so on in order to be taken seriously as a professional, but that's not at all true. These days I deliver the full gallery of high res images to my clients and sell a few small prints and albums, but that's it."



Looking Ahead

Having achieved so much already in what is still a relatively young career, Sam is enjoying the chance to focus on the aspects he most enjoys about his business. One of the things that really excites him is the opportunity to travel, to share with others the tips that have helped him become established and to take on destination weddings when the opportunity arises.

"My destination weddings are one hundred per cent a result of my reviews/workshops/patron content being put out into the world," he says. "I share a

TOP: Out of focus highlights in a scene can be readily used by Sam to create interesting areas of light and colour in a scene.

ABOVE LEFT: Sometimes the results that Sam achieves are so surreal that people might struggle to see them as wedding photography at all, but his clients, often from the creative industries, love his off-beat approach.

LEFT: Sam is constantly looking for reflections, small gestures and expressions and memorable incidents from the day he's covering.

ABOVE: Sam wil see situations developing and he's brilliant at identifying the potential of locations, but he spends only around 20 minutes on his couple portraits on the day.

lot of my opinions and insights about photography, so as a result I have a lot of photographers who are following my work. Photographers get married too and, as far as I can tell, they're the only ones with the budget and determination to fly someone in to a fancy destination. I don't market specifically for destinations: it's a result of the insights about my work I share and it ′s wonderful how it's worked out."

It's interesting to see how many creatively minded people have warmed to Sam's approach, one of those being Professional Photo columnist and Photography Farm founder Lisa Devlin, who was keen to bring him over to share his knowledge at her Thrive events and to encourage others to similarly follow their hearts in terms of their approach to photography.

And the theme of Sam's presentation at Thrive 2020? "I called it my 'Embrace the Panic' talk," he smiles. "I've found that the more comfortable I get in my own process as a photographer the worse my creative output becomes. I believe that it's good to knowingly set yourself up for shooting scenarios where you just have absolutely no idea what the outcome is going to be at the outset. You just begin and take it one iteration at a time. If you can learn to embrace the panic it will lead you down an endless path of curiosity and creativity. At least, that's the way it seems to have worked out for me and I like people to see that unfold in real time." PP

> "As the day unfolds I seize opportunities when appropriate, but otherwise just sit back and document without any intervention. Couple portraits on the day are very directed and controlled, but are still only created with iterations of 'trying stuff' I'm curious about."

More information:
/ *www.samhurdphotography.com*

Perfect high, low and

How do you get a bright background without blowing highlights or dark hair on a dark background without edges merging? Here's how to achieve perfect results every time.

WORDS SARAH PLATER **IMAGES** PAUL WILKINSON

THERE ARE THREE basics every studio photographer should know. Firstly, how to create a punchy, high key image. Secondly, how to create a moody, low key image. And thirdly, how to finesse their lighting in either of these two set-ups to achieve a more subtle or specific effect. For example, you might want to turn a white background into a mid-grey behind your subject instead or make a dark subject pop from a dark background through the use of rim lighting. Alternatively, you might be looking to add more depth and dimensionality by increasing the intensity of shadows in a high key portrait.

But first, what does high key and low key mean? A high key image is one with predominantly bright tones, while in a low key image those tones will be overwhelmingly dark. Being able to create both types of image for your clients gives you the best chance of creating something they're really going to love and buy!

So let's go through the different equipment and steps I use to create high and low key images and look at some examples. You'll also learn why catchlights are so important, and how they provide handy feedback on your lighting set-up.

ALL YOU NEED IS LIGHT

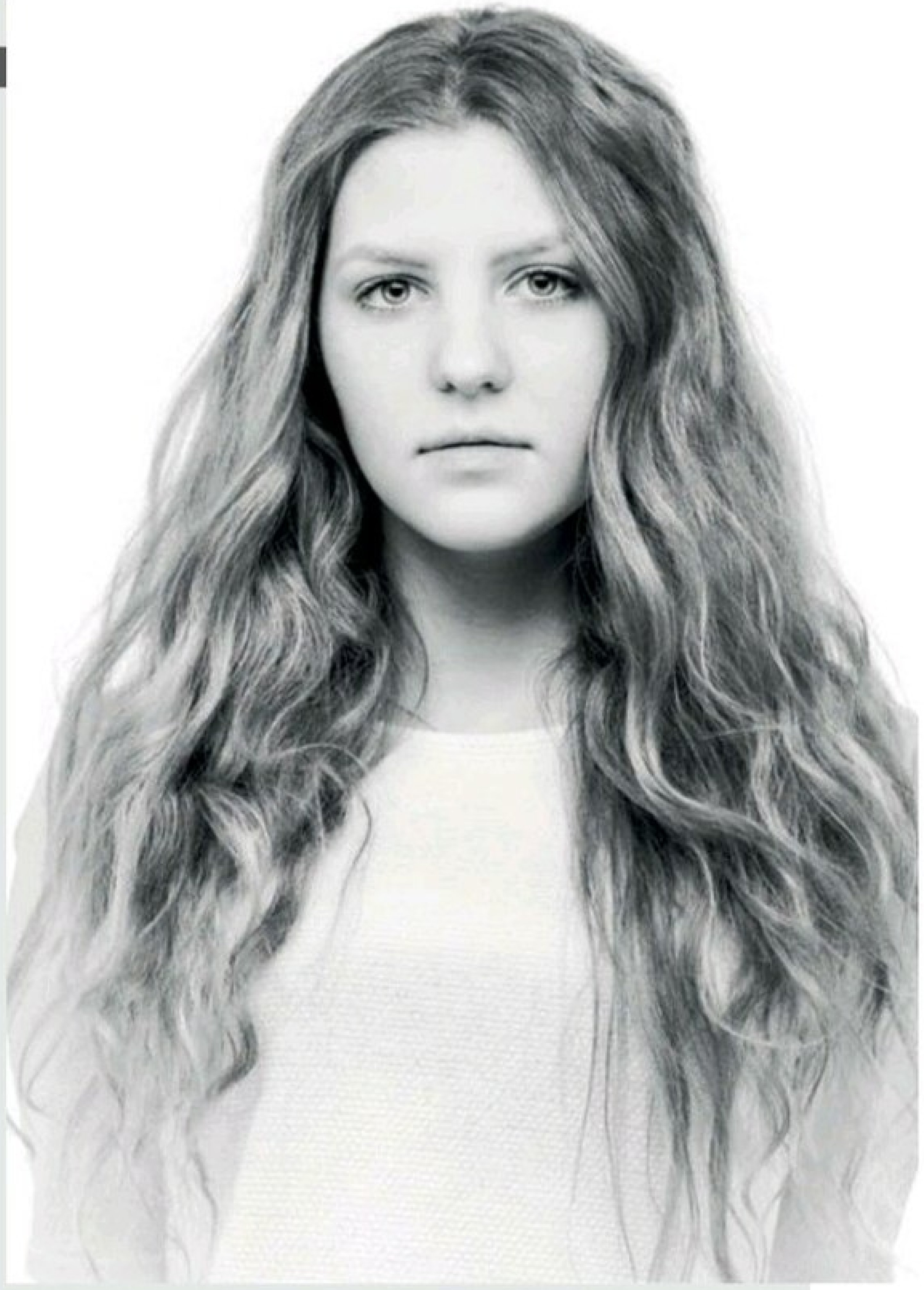
FOR MY MAIN LIGHT, I use a Profoto B1 strobe in a three-foot by two-foot softbox. The light is battery powered, and the stand is on wheels, which means I can easily glide it across the studio floor without worrying about tangling anyone up in wires or creating a trip hazard.

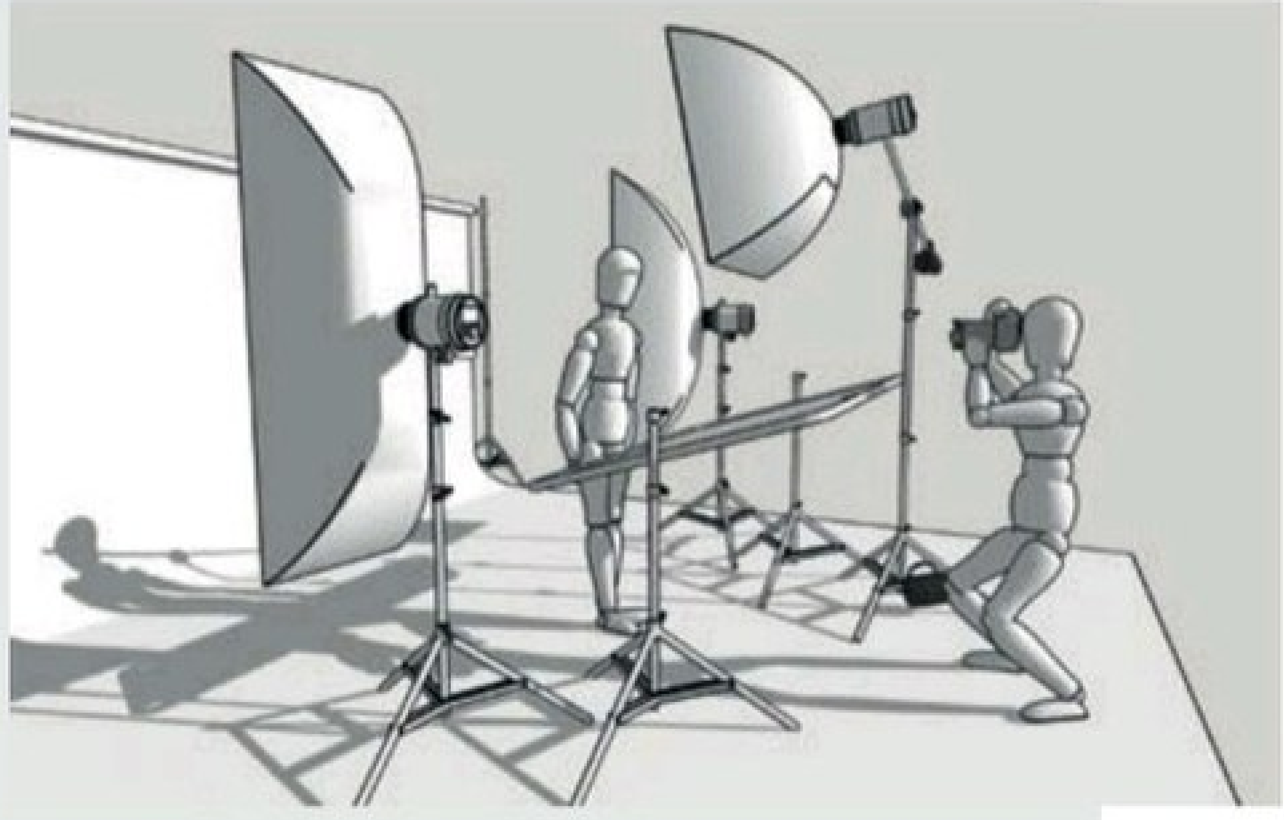
Of course, it's possible to create beautiful high and low key portraits with just one light. However, for a pure white background, or a rim lit subject on black, I supplement the main light with two Profoto D1 units in four-foot strip boxes. The D1 units are mains wired, but because they are tucked into the corners of my studio I don't need to worry about anyone tripping over the cords.

While I love my high end Profoto strobes for their speed and reliability, you can achieve the same effects with much cheaper flash units, or even continuous lights. Your results don't stem from how much you spend on your kit, but from your understanding and use of light.

In fact, we've shown in previous lighting tutorials in this magazine and on masteringportraitphotography.com that you can create stunning portraits with low cost speedlights or even 150w photographers' high CRI florescent tubes, available for around £15 each. The most important accessory here is the softbox, a large modifier which creates a soft and gentle light, and is entirely affordable for a start-up studio. You can, of course, use an umbrella instead, but I love the rectangular catchlights produced by softboxes.

Often, photographers hope that I can tell them which power setting to use on their lights. The bad news is that the right setting depends on so many contributing factors - your exposure settings, the power of your lights and the distance between them and your subject, for example - that specifying a number would be unhelpful. The good news is that you can start with any setting. Then review your image and, with just a little bit of thought, adjust the power as necessary. Too dark? Increase the power. Too bright? Decrease it. Easy.





RIGHT: 140mm at f/5.6, 1/180sec, ISO 50
I typically position my main light to one side, but sometimes my favourite portrait from a shoot is created with the main light directly overhead and slightly in front of my subject. This is known as 'butterfly lighting' as the shadow under the nose (apparently!) looks like a butterfly's wings. However, the shadow here is very diffused as I've used such a big softbox. I always underexpose an image like this slightly to avoid blowing the highlights to pure white. I then push the exposure up in postprocessing as it's a more controllable way to fine-tune the image.

mid key portraits

CAMERA AS METER READER

I PRIMARILY USE a Nikon D5 with a 70-200mm lens for my portrait photography, both of which require significant investment. However, most of the camera settings I've used for these images are available on entry-level DSLRs and mirrorless cameras. In the studio you can stick with middle-of-the-road apertures such as f/5.6, f/8 and f/11 because you don't need to blur out a busy background, as you might need to outdoors or in someone's home.

I've stopped using a light meter due to the quality of the digital screen on camera backs. A light meter predicts which settings to use for a picture you're about to take. By contrast, the LCD panel on the camera informs you about the picture you've just taken. Whenever I get a new camera body I get a model in the studio and learn to read the LCD panel and spend time getting to know my camera inside out. Before relying on this for a client shoot send off test prints to compare with what you see on the camera and computer screens.

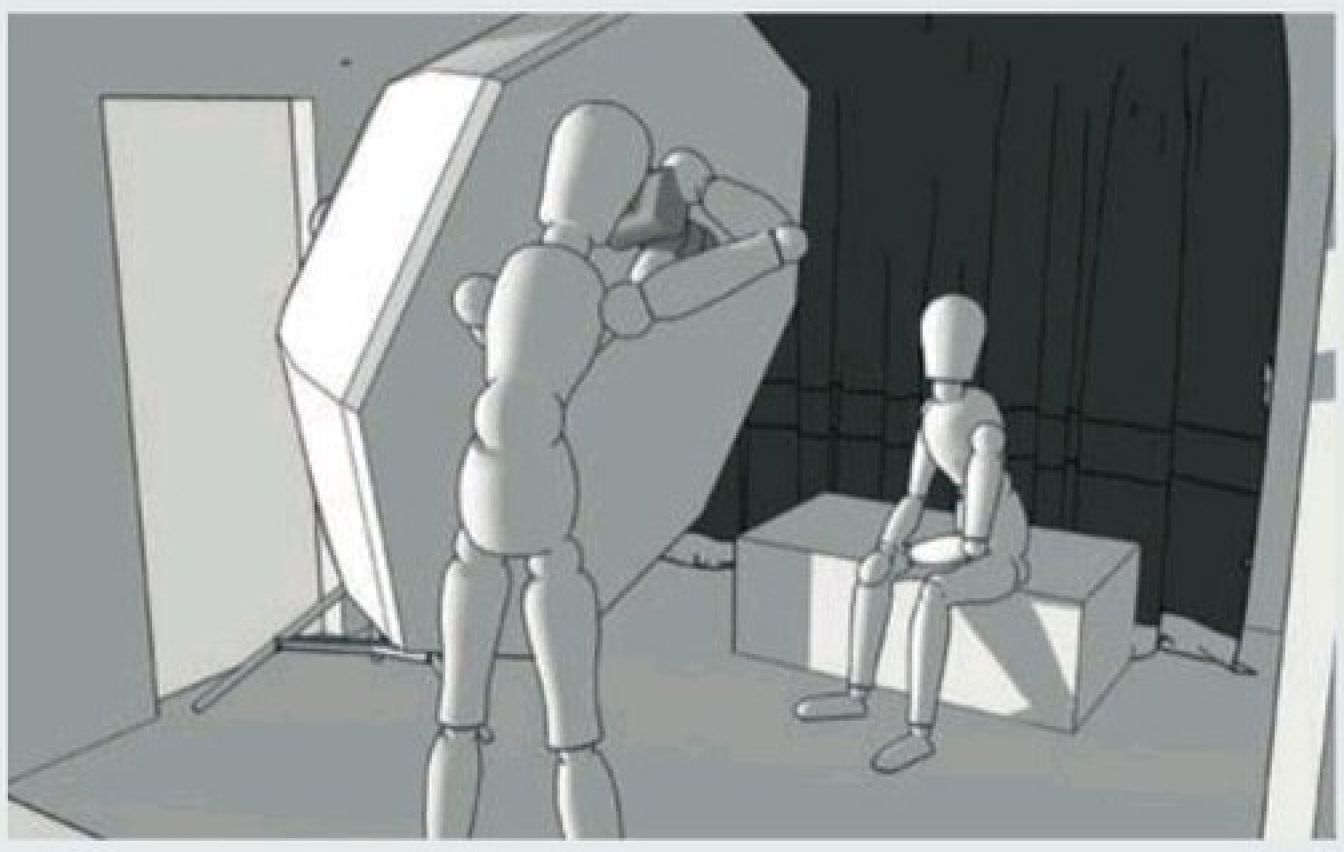
TRANSFORM YOUR PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Access a ton of fresh ideas and practical tips for intermediate and advanced portrait photographers at MasteringPortraitPhotography.com. Build your business and transform your photography with hundreds of lighting diagrams, articles, videos, podcasts and more, plus get answers to your questions and feedback on your images in our friendly forums and constructive critiques. Head to MasteringPortraitPhotography.com and sign up for your free access now!

IN THE BACKGROUND

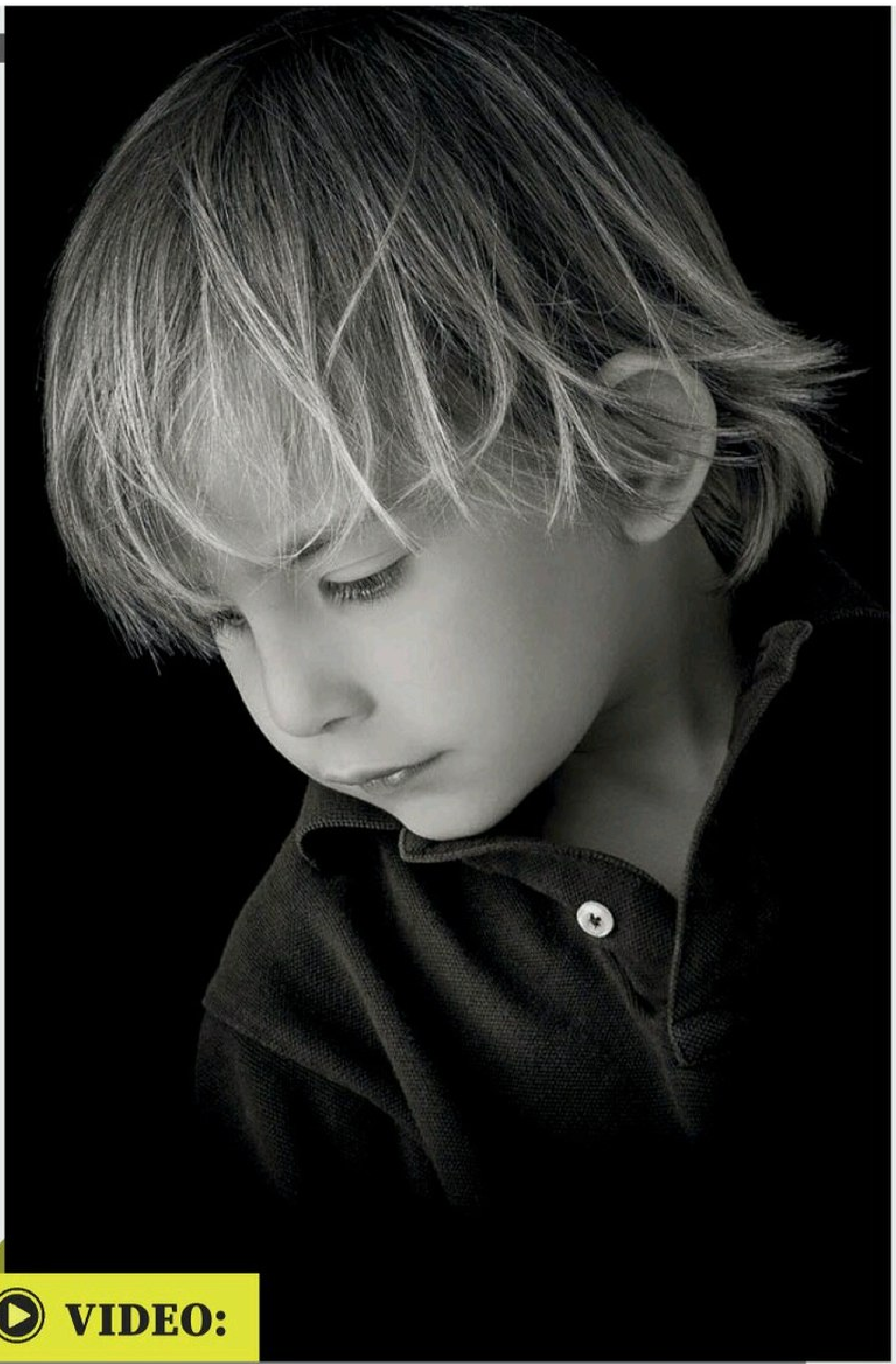
BEHIND MY SUBJECT is usually either a white wall or a black paper roll background. The wall is simply an everyday plasterboard structure, covered in trade matt white. Avoid vinyl or eggshell paints, which have a slight sheen to them. You'll find that a matt white wall will light evenly no matter what angle the light is hitting it from.

I use black velvet as a background when I want an inky black background, as it absorbs almost all of the light that hits it. However, most of the time I want a little light to bounce back, and black paper has a slight sheen to it which delivers a subtle tonal lift from pure black to almost-black.



RIGHT: 62mm at f/10, 1/125sec, ISO 200

I photographed six-year-old Ben at his home as part of a family shoot. I clipped black velvet up to the curtain rail in one of the rooms for an inky black background and lit Ben with a six-foot octagonal softbox just a foot or two away, giving a large, soft light source. As Ben has light-toned hair I didn't need to worry about it merging into the black tones of the velvet behind him.



VIDEO:

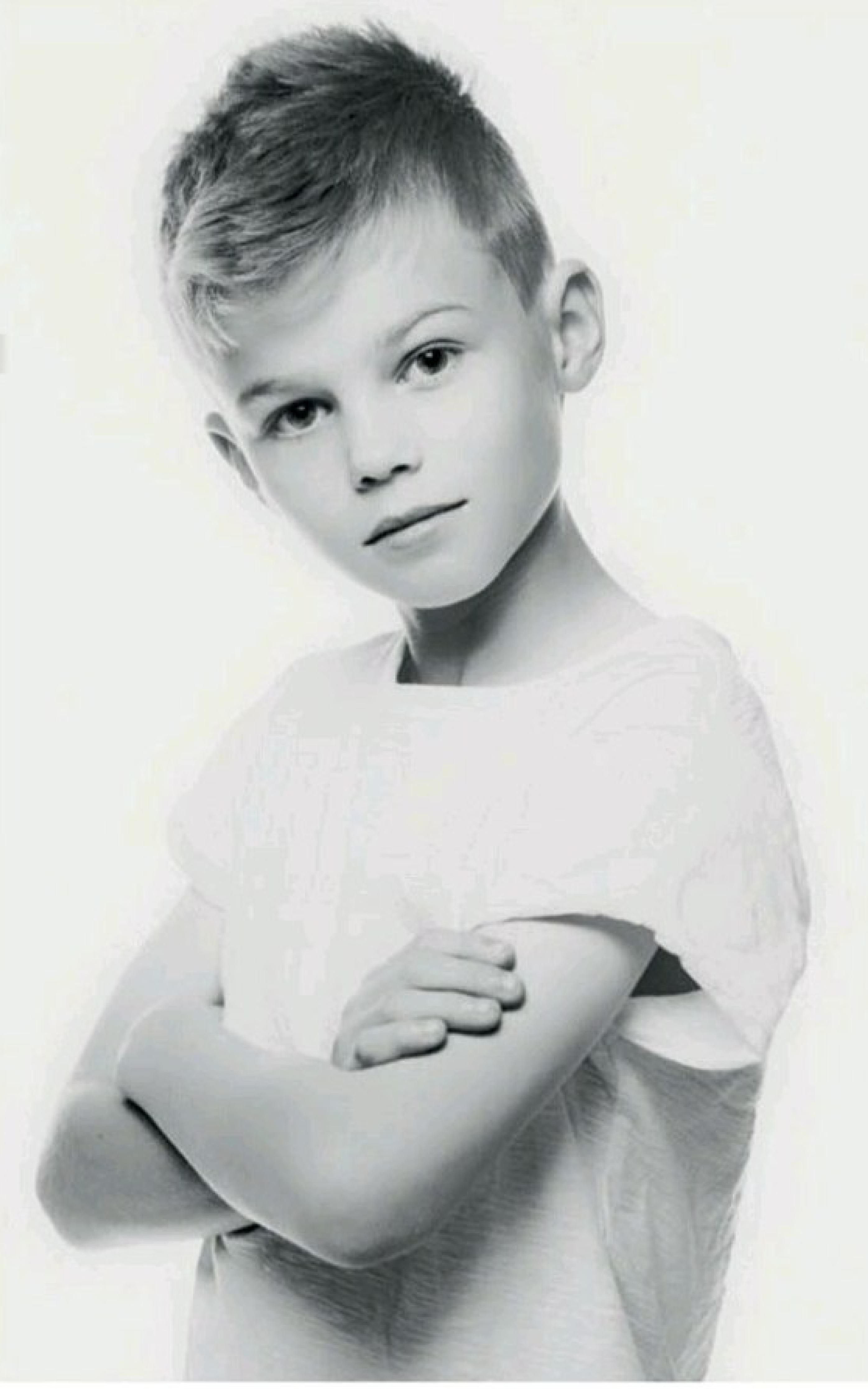
Learn how I managed to get Ben to stop pulling funny faces and sit still for just long enough for me to grab this shot at: pwfoto.co/cover-story.

THE EYES HAVE IT

CATCHLIGHTS ARE REFLECTIONS of the light source in your subject's eyes and I could talk about them all day long. Not only do they add life and sparkle to a person's eyes, but they also offer a quick lighting check.

Imagine a line linking up your subject's pupils. If there is a catchlight in both eyes, above that line, then there's a good chance your lighting is about right. If you can't see catchlights or if they are too low in the eyes, then try adjusting the height or position of your light until they appear.

The bigger and closer the light source, the bigger the catchlights will be. The smaller and further away the light source, the smaller the catchlights will be. Either way, make sure you have them in there to stop the eyes looking dull and lifeless.



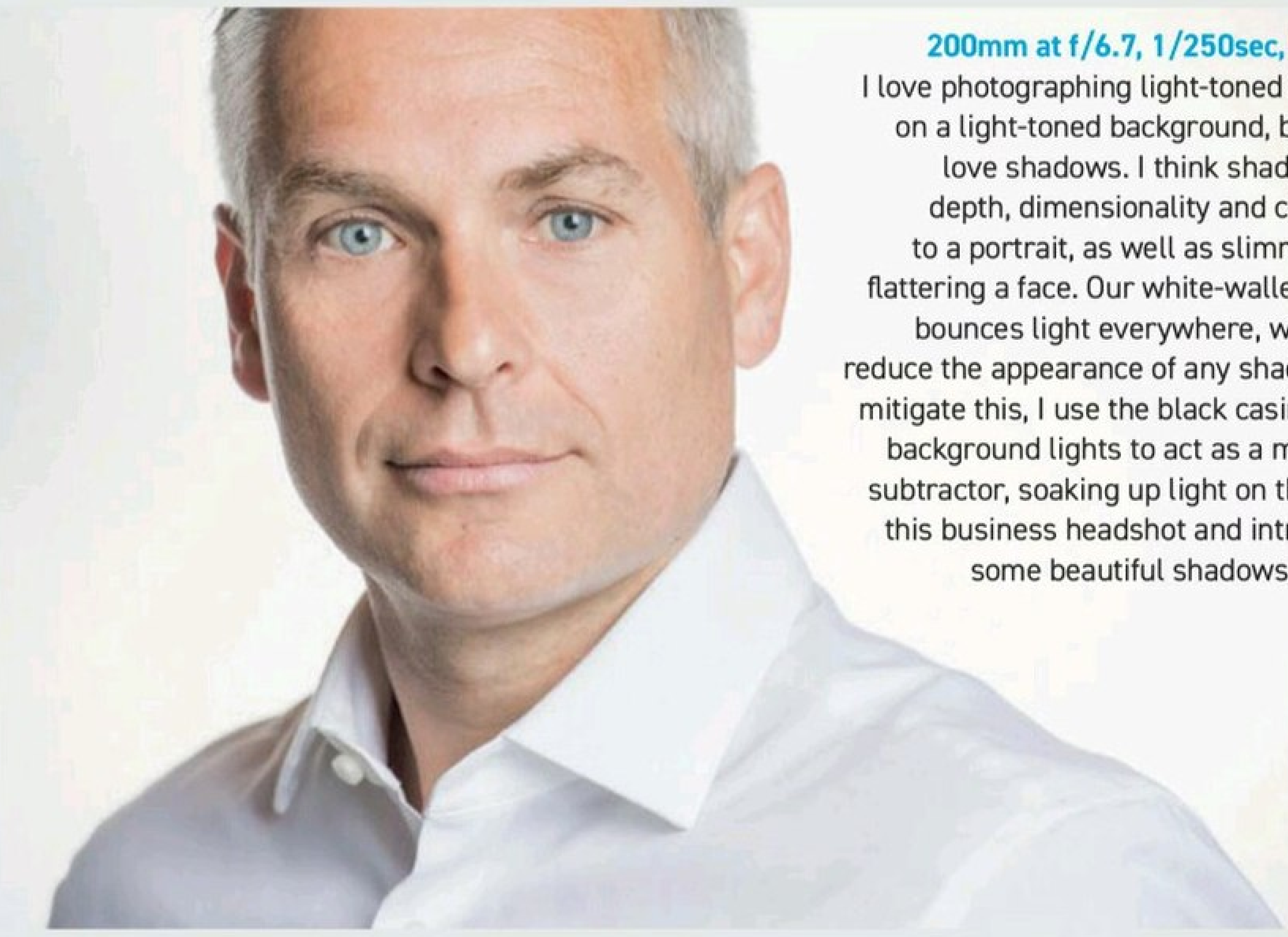
RIGHT: 140mm at f/6.7, 1/180sec, ISO 100
I photographed young Kai wearing a white T-shirt in front of a bright, white background. The effectiveness of the shot lies in the fact that there's still tonal detail across the image. There are no blown highlights rendered as blocks of pure, white pixels where image detail has been lost. To achieve this I set up and tested my main and background lights independently, before combining them for the final shot. This ensures I fully control the impact of the background lights relative to my main light.

HIGH KEY PORTRAIT LIGHTING

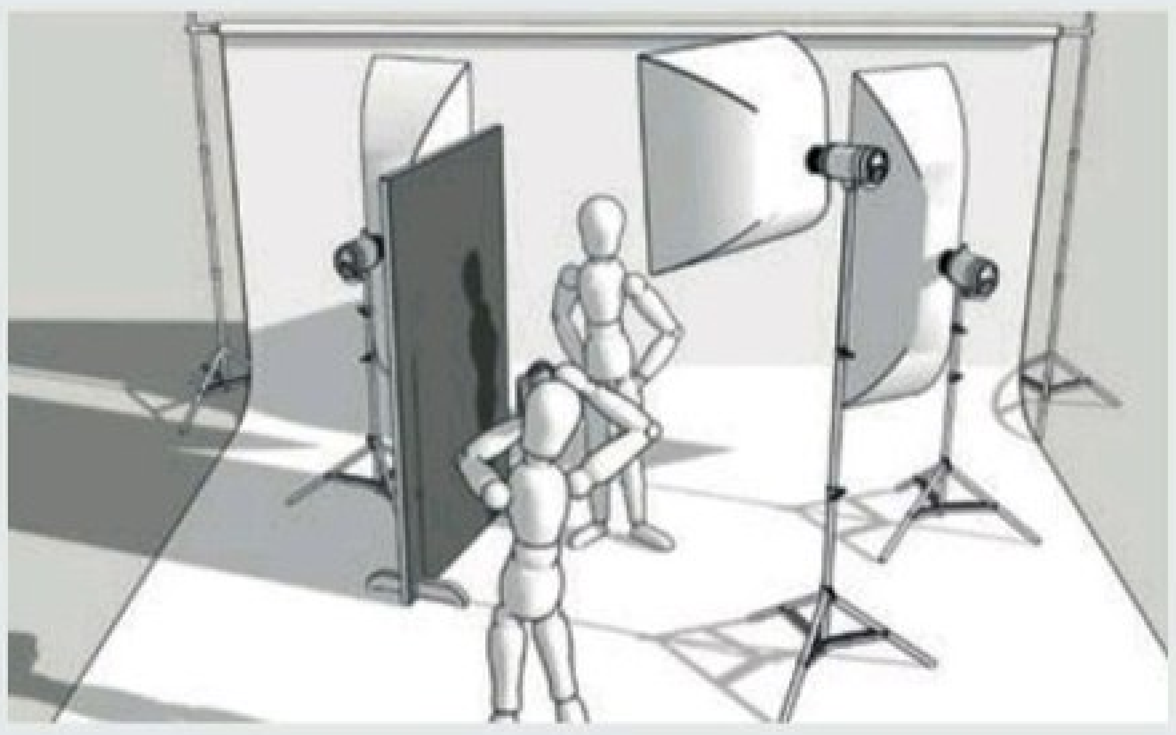
MY METHOD IS TO set up, test and adjust the main light and background lights independently. Position your subject a few feet in front of your white wall, with two strip boxes facing towards the background. These will need to be positioned far enough behind your subject so that none of the light emitted can spill on to your subject's face.

When I take a photograph of my subject with just the background lights switched on I'm looking for their face to be silhouetted. I turn on the histogram and check that the pixels on the right-hand side of the graph are stacked up near to - but not on - the edge. When the pixels are stacked against the right-hand edge, that means some areas of the frame are rendering as pure white, without any detail. This causes a couple of problems. Firstly, it can cause edge details of your subject, such as their hair, to be lost, making the final image look like a bad cut-out. Secondly, it means that you have no pixel information for that part of the frame, which means you can't manipulate it as easily in postproduction. Far better to leave yourself a little leeway in-camera, as you can easily brighten and fine-tune your highlights afterwards if you need to.

Once I'm happy with the background lights I'll switch them off and set up my main light. I usually position this slightly above my subject's head height, off to one side and slightly in front of my subject. I adjust the power until my subject's face is perfectly exposed while using the exact same camera settings as for my silhouetted



200mm at f/6.7, 1/250sec, ISO 100
I love photographing light-toned subjects on a light-toned background, but I also love shadows. I think shadows add depth, dimensionality and character to a portrait, as well as slimming and flattering a face. Our white-walled studio bounces light everywhere, which can reduce the appearance of any shadows. To mitigate this, I use the black casing of my background lights to act as a makeshift subtractor, soaking up light on the left of this business headshot and introducing some beautiful shadows instead.



THE POWER OF LIMITED COLOUR PALETTES

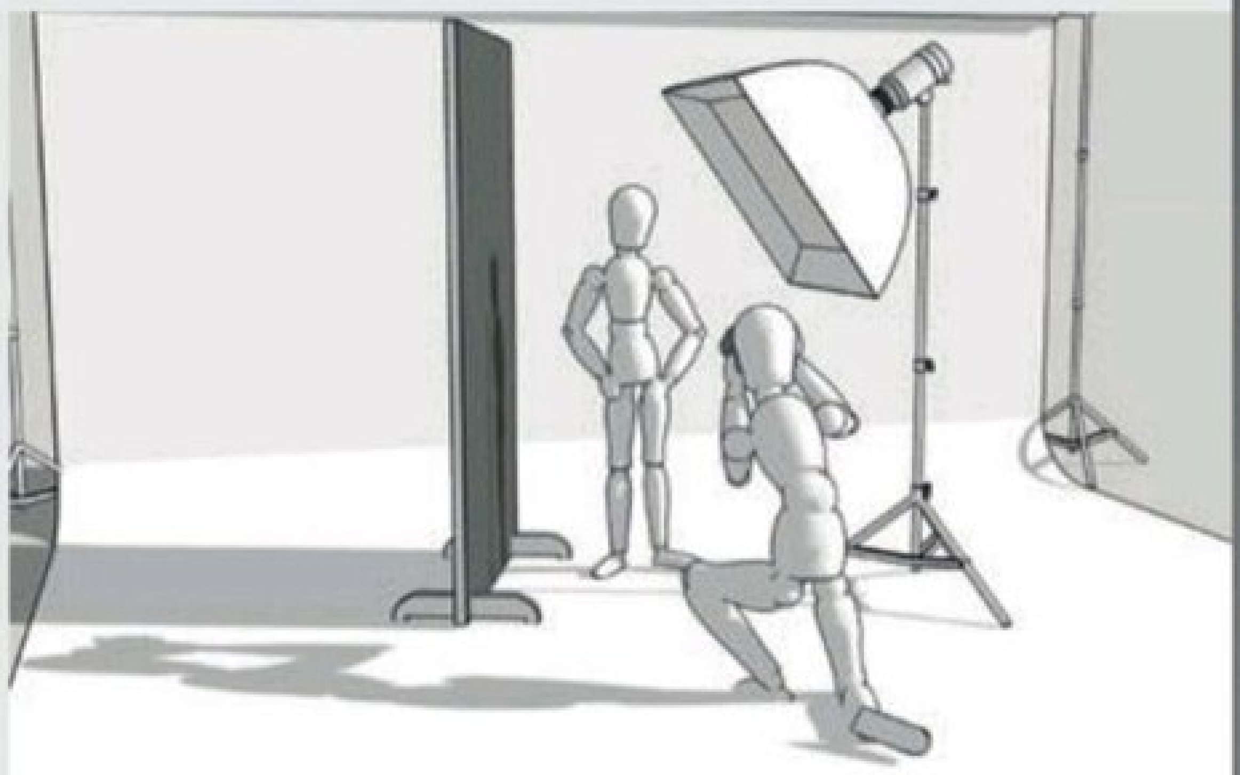
MY JOB AS A portrait photographer is to guide the viewer's eye to my subject's face. I find that the most effective way to do this is for all the colours to be harmonious in an image, which simply means lots of similar tones. That's why I love photographing light-toned clothing on a light-toned background and dark-toned clothing on a dark background.

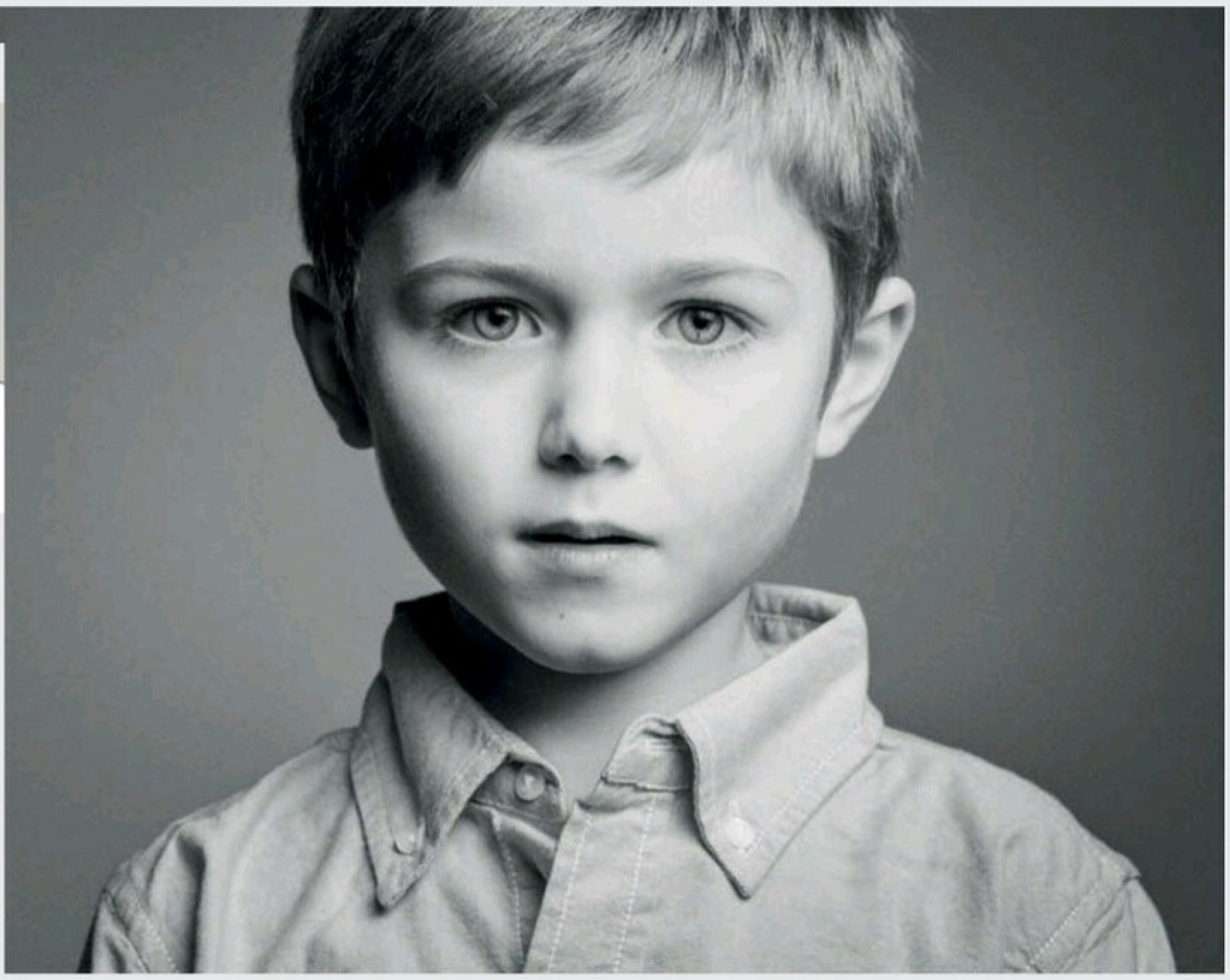
This way, the contrasting part of the image is the subject's face, and that's what keeps pulling your gaze in the frame. In addition, beautiful catchlights draw your eye to the subject's eyes, so the experience is akin to staring straight into the soul of the subject. Lots of contrast elsewhere in the image - such as a black leather jacket over a white T-shirt - distracts the viewer's eye and diminishes the effect, which is why I try to avoid it.

Traditionally, studio photographers have avoided photographing light tones on light-coloured backgrounds or dark tones on a dark background, out of a fear of all the tones merging together. With careful lighting however, you can reveal the tone and texture of a white T-shirt in front of a bright white background without losing any detail at all. Equally, you can light up the edges of a dark top with rim lighting, or pour a little light on a dark background, to separate two dark tones from one another.

ACHIEVING A MID-KEY PORTRAIT WITH A WHITE BACKGROUND

ONCE YOU'VE CAPTURED perfect high key portraits why not create a mid-key version? An underexposed white background renders as grey, so switch off your background lights and leave your main light on. Retake your shot and you should have a perfectly exposed face on a grey background. For a darker grey, move your subject and main light further forward, so less light from your main light is reflecting. For a lighter grey, turn background lights back on with a reduced power and/or move subject and main light closer to the background.





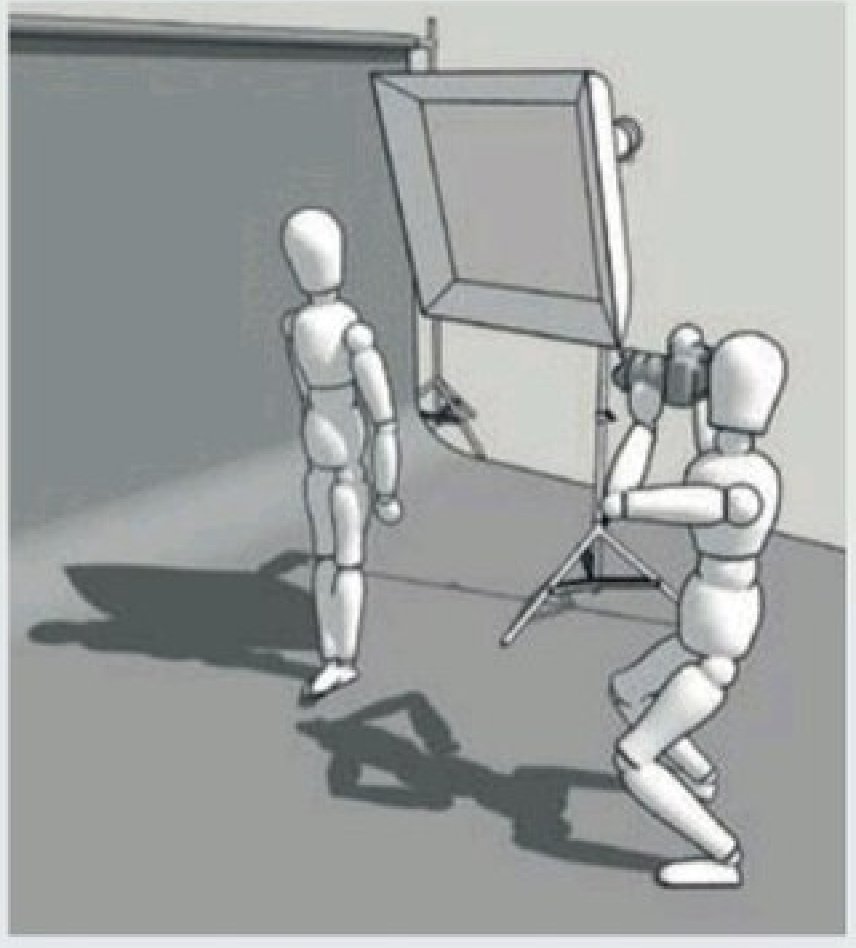
RIGHT: 200mm at f/11, 1/180sec, ISO 100
You can get all the shades of grey you want from just a white wall or white paper background and a single light source. By increasing the power on the light falling on your subject's face - and adjusting your exposure settings accordingly - everything behind them will render as darker. You can increase the effect by moving your subject further forward from your background. This mid-key portrait works particularly well as the child is wearing a mid-toned shirt, creating a beautifully harmonious portrait.

shot. Once I'm happy with my main light set-up, I switch my background lights back on and take my final shot.

Of course, after doing this in the same studio again and again, you'll quickly learn what settings and distances work best for your lights in the space you've got. This means that the whole process of setting up should take just a couple of minutes when you do it regularly, and soon you'll be able to skip straight to the three-light set-up without needing the test shots. Alternatively, ask your subject to lean against your white wall and use just one light slightly to the side to light both the subject and the background.

So what about if you want more shadows, but with the bright, white background of the three-light set-up? I use the black cases of the strip boxes close in to my subject to absorb some of the light and introduce more shadows. Alternatively you can use subtractors to do the same job. These are large pieces of black-coated foam board that you can prop near to your subject on the side you want more shadowed, or you can make DIY subtractors by hanging up black paper or fabric instead. To see these high key portrait techniques in use, head to https://pwfoto.co/simpleheadshots.

THE LOW KEY PORTRAIT



I HAVE TWO GO-TO set-ups for low key portraits of dark tones on a dark background. The first uses just one light and creates a striking, classical style of portrait. The second is a three-light set-up that is beautifully contemporary. We'll start with the one-light set-up.

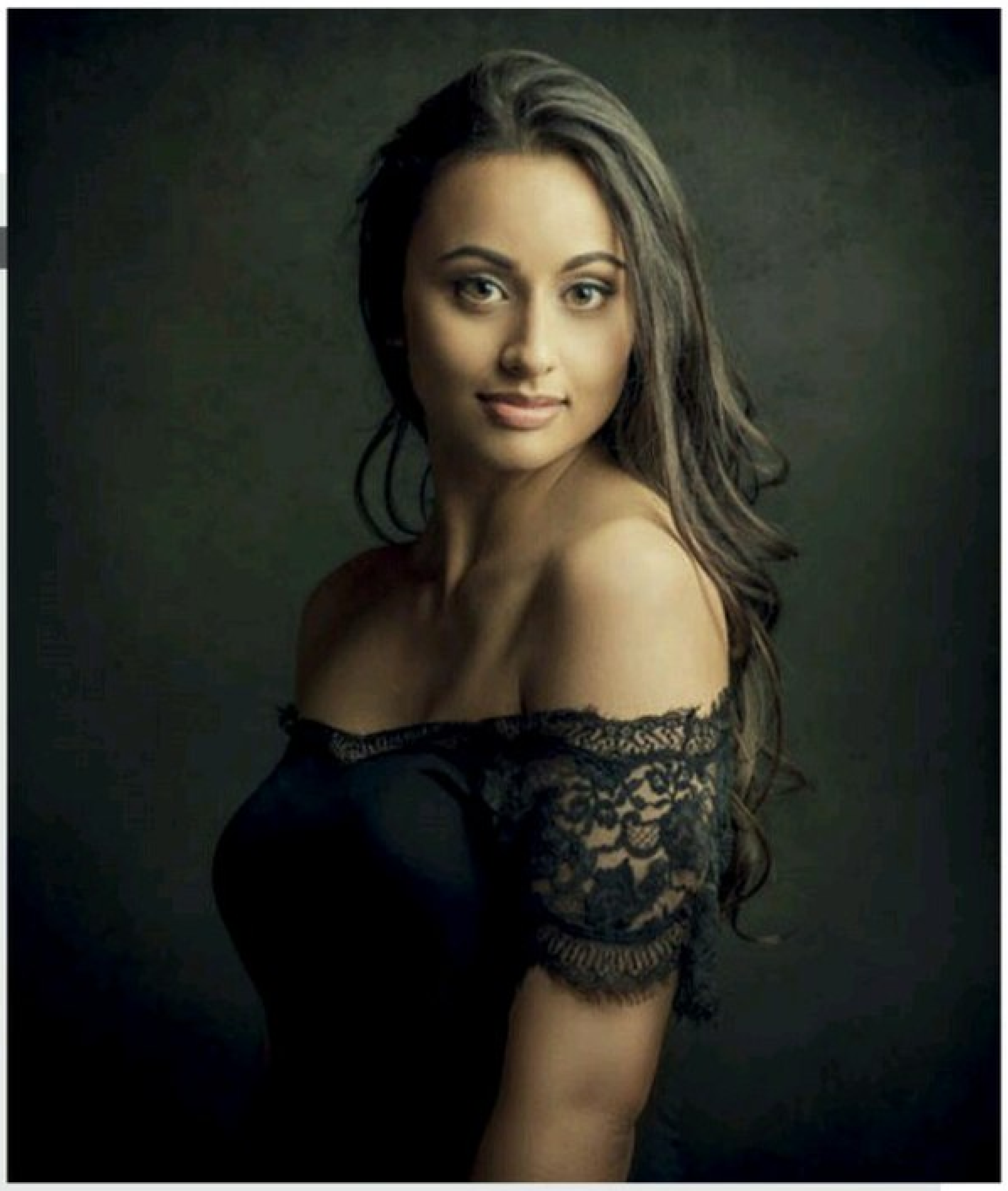
Even though my main light is diffused by a softbox, there will still be variation in the intensity of the light emitted across its surface. The light in the middle will be slightly harsher and more intense, while the light from its edges will be softer and more diffuse. I like to work with the light from the edge, in a technique known as 'feathering' the light.

All this means is that you start off with the light to one side, angled directly towards your subject's face, then turn it away slightly. If you angle it slightly towards the camera, then the light from the far edge of the softbox will light your subject's face. The rest of the light - the 'waste' light - will then end up falling on the floor in front of your subject, making little impact on your shot.

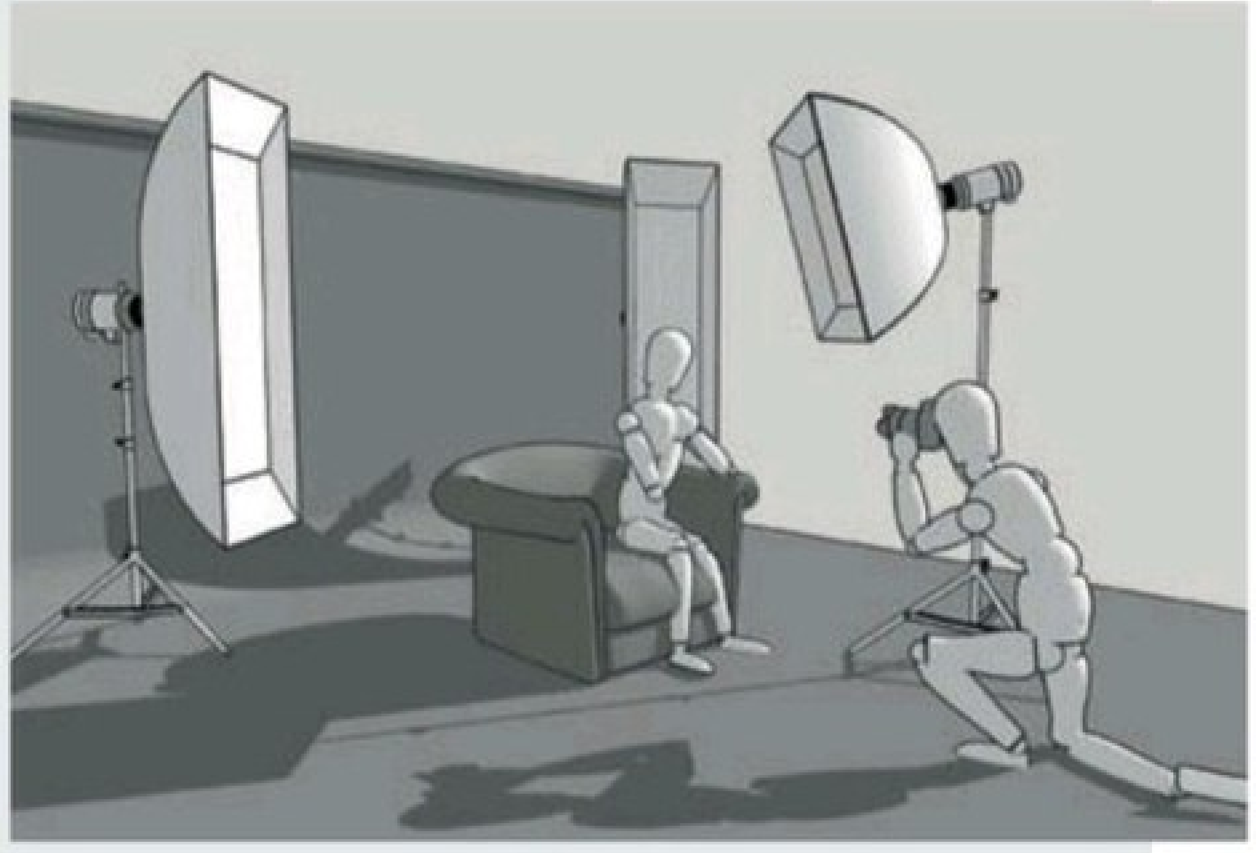
If, however, you angle it slightly towards the background, then the waste light will fall on the background. This will lift the black paper roll so it's a lighter shade than the dark outlines of your subject's clothes and hair. Doing this means that the edges of your subject will now be visible against the slightly paler tones of your background.

Alternatively, you can use a three-light set-up to rim light your subject. Feather your main light forwards, so that its waste light isn't able to reach the background. Then you need to add in two strip boxes behind and slightly to each side of your subject, angled back in towards him or her.

As with the high key three-light set-up, turn off your main light first so you can identify and adjust the impact of the rim light. It should be visible but still subtle - a gentle glow rather than a blinding halo of light. Then, add your main light back in and take your shot. Review your image on the back of the camera then adjust your main or background lights if necessary.



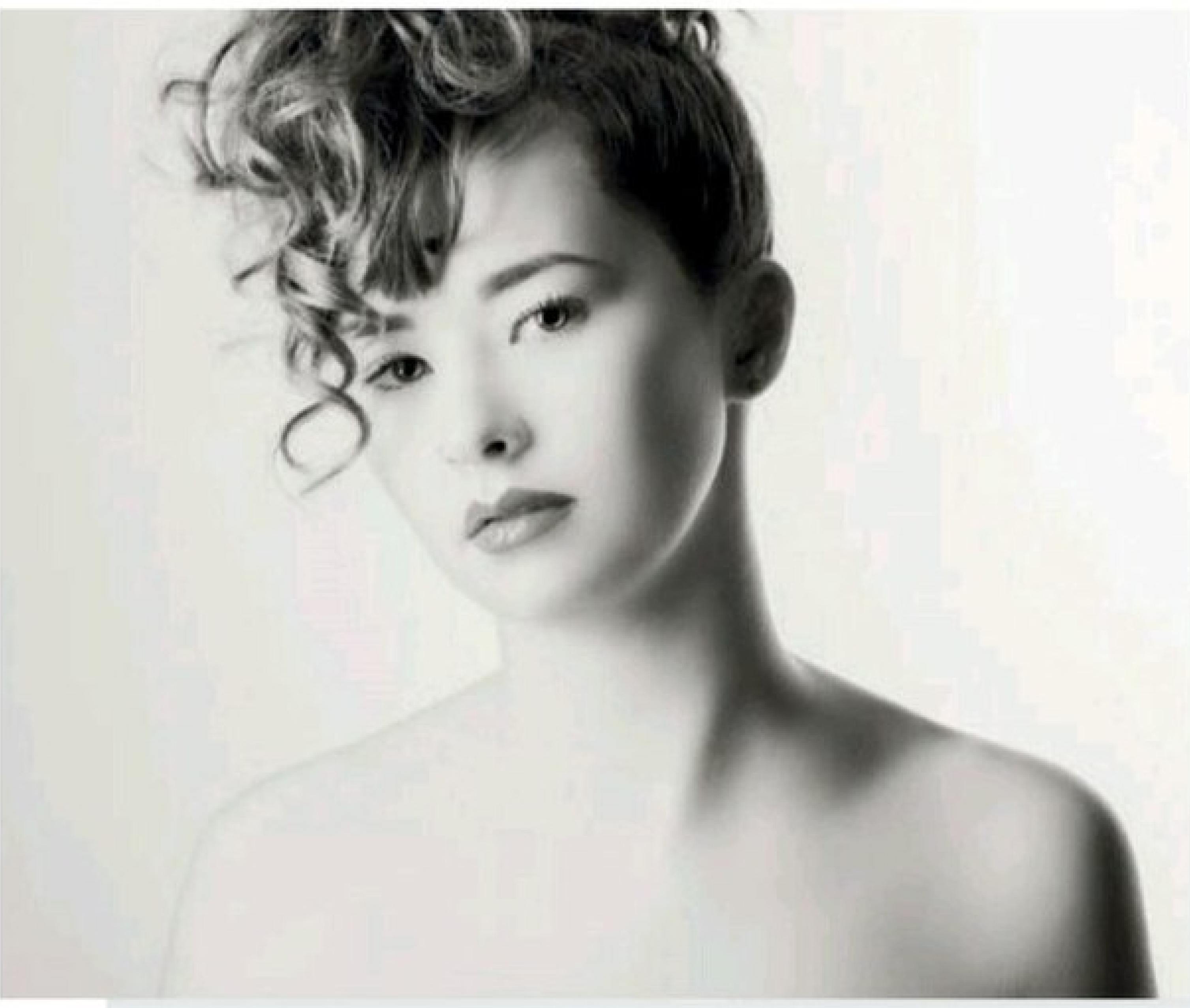
ABOVE: 200mm at f/6.7, 1/180sec, ISO 100
I like to work with the edges of the light, a technique known as 'feathering'. This involves angling the softbox slightly away from my subject's face, so that the light reaching the face is softened further, rather than using the most intense light from the centre of the softbox. In doing this, if I angle the softbox so that it's facing towards the back of the scene rather than the front, some of that light from the centre of the softbox will fall on the background instead. This is an alternative technique to separate the dark tones of a subject from a dark background.

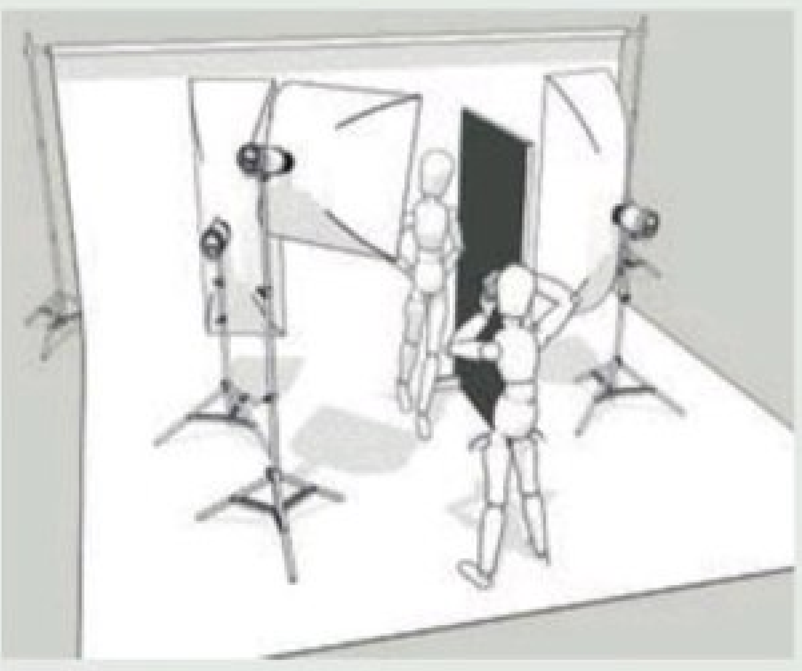


LEFT: 80mm at f/8, 1/180sec, ISO 100
90-year-old Pauline arrived wearing a black hat and top. I wanted to photograph her against a black background without all the dark tones merging into each other. To do this I used two strip boxes behind and to each side of her, angled towards her sides. These produced lovely highlights along the edges of her top and hat. and made sure that she still stood out.

VIDEO:

Find out why Pauline really didn't want to have her photo taken, and how I eventually won her round, at pwfoto.co/pauline.



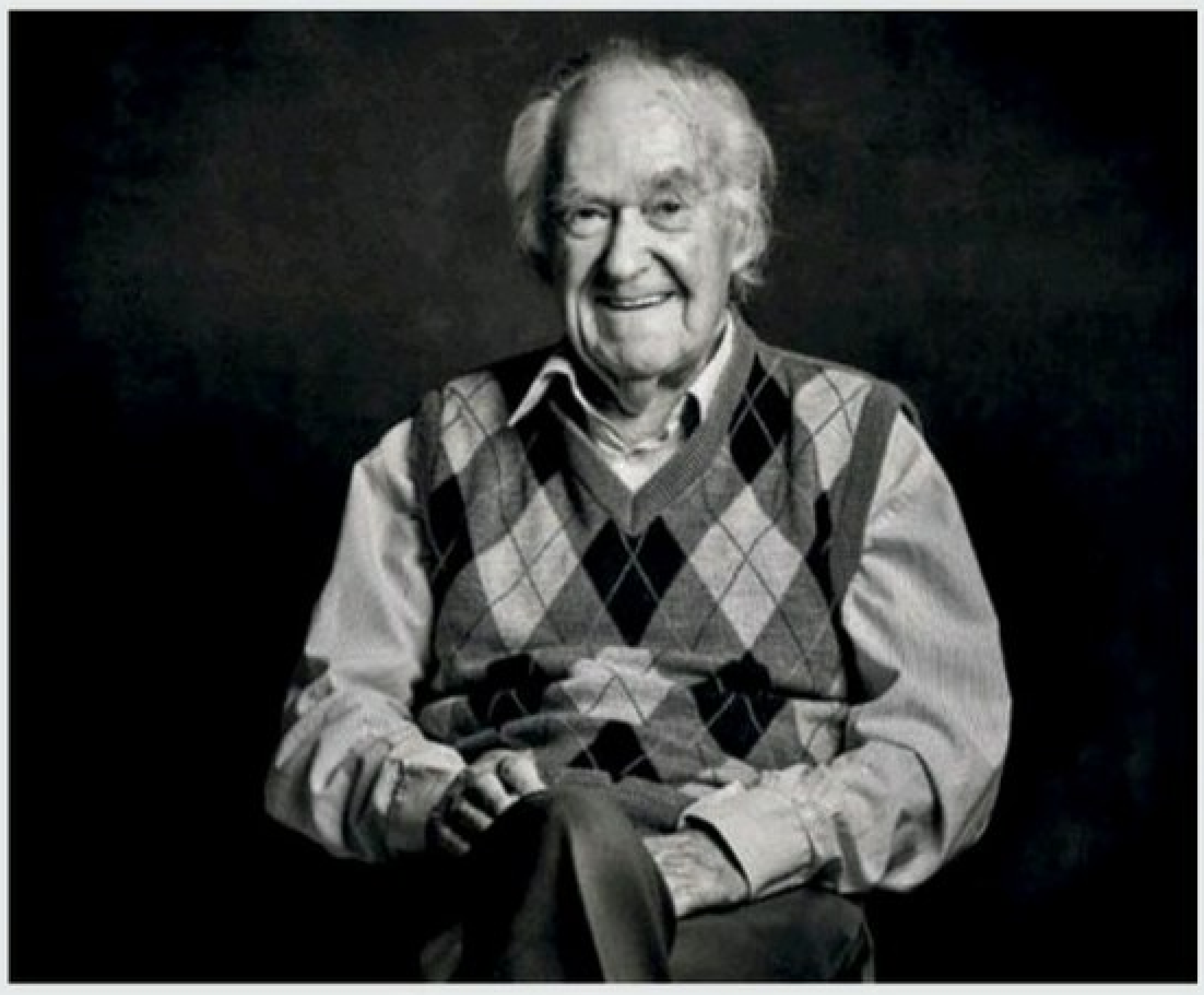


LEFT: In this portrait, the side of the subject's face that we can see more of has all the shadows. This is called narrow lighting and it's the most flattering lighting pattern for the majority of people, as it makes faces look a little slimmer.

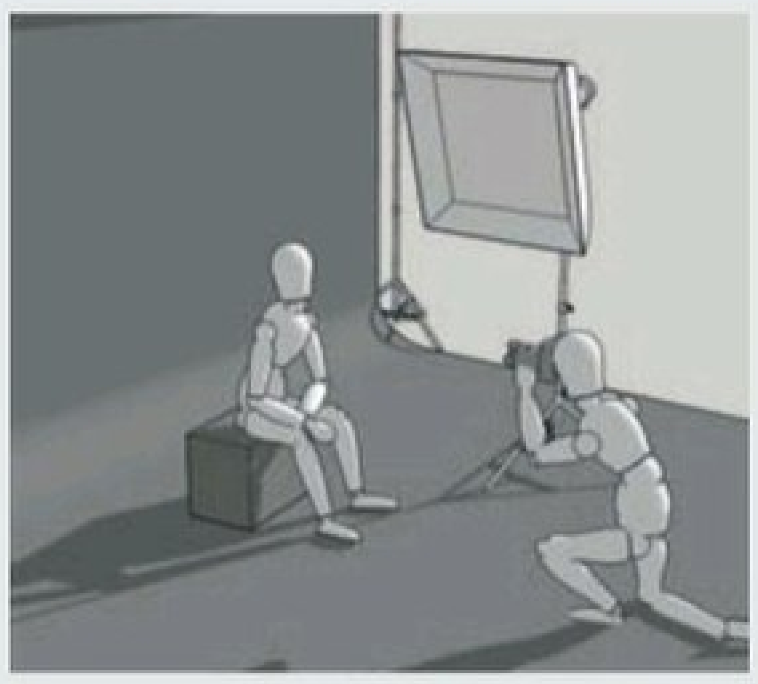
BROAD & NARROW LIGHTING

WHEN YOUR LIGHT SOURCE is to one side of your subject, you can angle their face away from, or towards, the light to create what's known as a broad or narrow lighting pattern. Broad lighting is when the side of the face closest to the camera is lit, and the far side in shadow. Narrow lighting is the opposite: the nearest side of the face is shadowed, with the far side lit.

Light accentuates whatever it falls on, while shadow hides and diminishes whatever it covers. Having the near side of the face in shadow makes the whole face look slimmer, while broad lighting makes it look wider. This means that if your subject has a normal or wide face shape, then narrow lighting will usually be the most flattering. Conversely, if your subject has a thin face, broad lighting will typically look best.

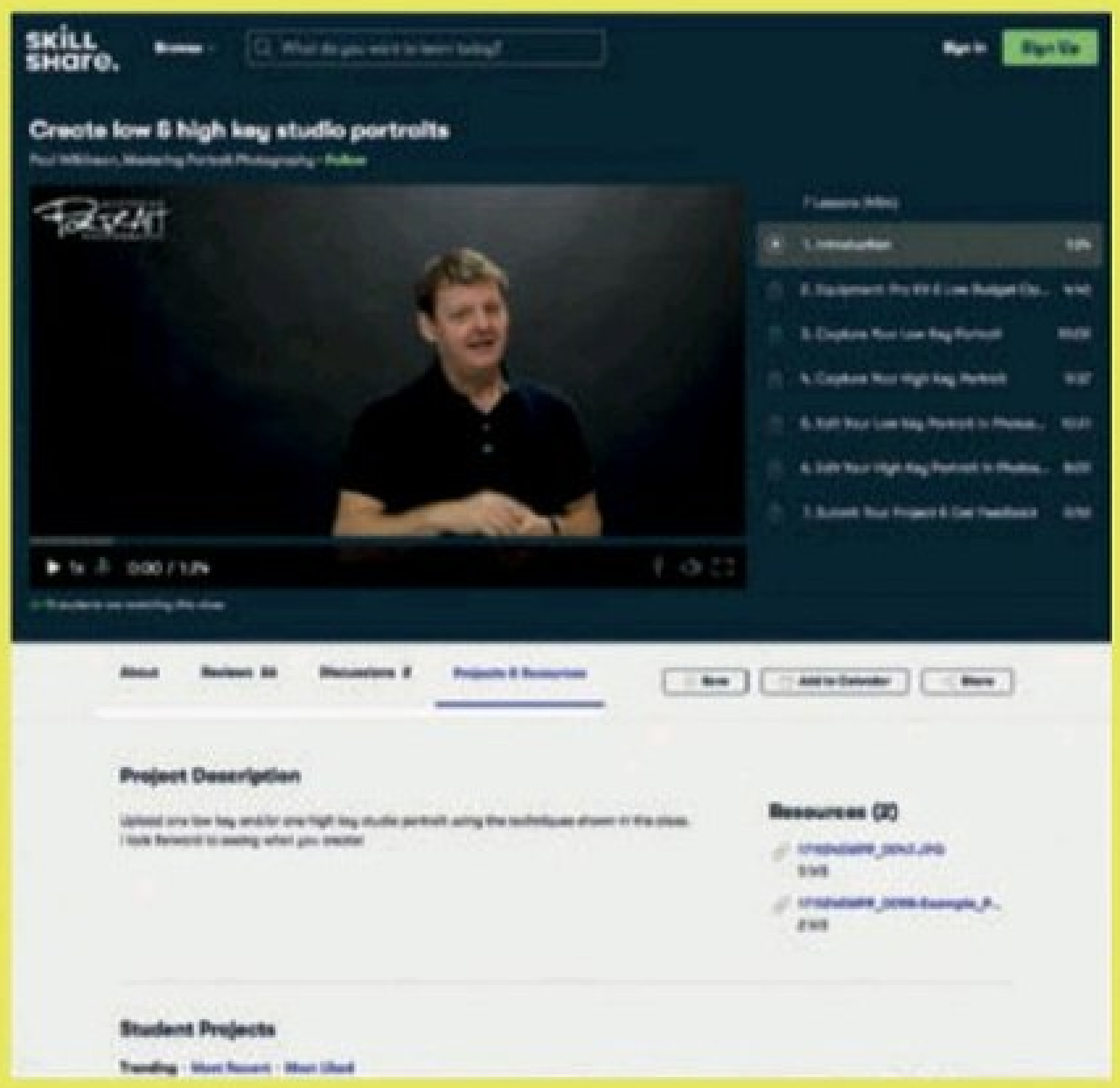


LEFT: Here, the side of the subject's face that is showing - just slightly! - more to the camera is receiving most of the light. This is broad lighting which is most flattering on people with narrow faces.



VIDEO

Watch Paul put all these techniques into practice to create two beautiful portraits; one high key and one low key. Paul uses both top end flash and cheap-as-chips continuous light sources to show it's not how much you spend, but what you do with your kit that counts. There's also a step-by-step walkthrough of the postproduction techniques that Paul uses to create both of his finished portraits. Sign up for free and watch it now: https://pwfoto.co/36Sci41



MEET THE PRO

Paul Wilkinson FMPA FBIPP FSWPP is a multi-award winning international photographer, with a boutique studio midway between Oxford and London. He is co-author of the best-selling book Mastering Portrait Photography and shares his skills and experience with other photographers through the free companion site www.masteringportraitphotography.com.

Got a question or suggestion for a future topic? Email Paul via: info@masteringportraitphotography.com

Paul Wilkin

Mastering Portrait Photography by Paul Wilkinson and Sarah Plater is published by Ammonite Press, priced £19.99. Available from www.thegmcgroup.com and all good book shops.

MASTERING PORTRAIT
PHOTOGRAPHY

NEXT MONTH: ADVANCED STUDIO LIGHTING

Now that you're familiar with the basics, join us next month as we get creative with different modifiers to perfect the lighting effect on different clients' faces, bodies and hair. We'll look at when and why you might want to reach for different modifiers, or go without them entirely, and also consider the impact of different shapes, sizes and colours.

Got a question about high key or low key portrait photography? Interested in watching me put the above into practice on real shoots? Want feedback on your images? Get access to all this and loads more inspirational tips and ideas at our free training site, MasteringPortraitPhotography.com. I can't wait to see what you create!

THE MOVE TOWARDS MOTION

Mastering Movement

Unintentionally unsteady footage can take the shine off any production, so it's crucial to learn how to tame the tremble and achieve results that are pin sharp, even if the camera is moving.

PART FIVE

WORDS RICK BRONKS

COMING TO THE world of video from stills photography you'll already know the importance of having a decent tripod to keep your shots steady. And if all you ever want to do is to keep your camera locked down and static then you can carry on using this method for motion work. However, while a locked-off shot might be fine for those occasions when you're shooting something specific, such as a time lapse or when you're working with more than one camera – more on that later - if you end up never having any movement in the frame it won't make for very exciting viewing.

The wonderful world of the moving image opens up many more doors for us in how we tell a story. Work with stills and you have to plan your narrative and then consider a series of static images that can convey your ideas and feelings. With video, however, there's a lot more to consider. As well as the obvious technicalities of exposure/shutter and so on, there's also how you set up the shots and how you then take these to the audience. For this - as always - there's a variety of tools that all offer different sets of pros and cons with regard to visual storytelling.

Let's start with the basics – your own hands. Holding a camera perfectly still without some kind of bespoke support is not as easy as it seems. If you want to get some shots without all the hassle of using an accessory or you're on a budget and don't have the necessary tools with you then hand holding can be an option. It's actually become more feasible these days, and both the cameras I'm shooting with at the moment – the Panasonic Lumix S1H and S1 - offer an insane amount of stabilisation in the camera and lens. This is so good that the footage looks as though it was produced with the camera on a tripod.

There is a downside, however, and that's the fact that it's very hard to hold a position for a decent amount of time. So, if you're shooting an interview, you'll end up getting tired pretty quickly and this will ultimately affect the shot. Where handheld shooting can come into its own, however, is when you're running around shooting bits and pieces on the fly, and this technique is something you should practise, because it's a skill well worth honing.

To make handheld work easier you can add things to your camera which, while not saving you getting tired, will make your camera more comfortable to handle. I have a 'cage' on my S1H which is like a Meccano set. It allows me to add and remove accessories depending on what I'm shooting. I can add a top handle, a side handle and such things as microphones, say, for example, a Sennheiser MKE 600 shotgun, and a monitor. There's a

ABOVE: The revolutionary Flowtech tripod from Sachtler can get down ultra low for dramatic shots.

ABOVE: Zhiyun's Weebill S, reviewed in this issue, is a typical modern gimbal that enables the filmmaker to follow the action while still producing stable footage.

huge variety of cages out there and you can choose the one that best suits what you want to shoot while ensuring it won't add too much bulk to your overall set up.
The caveat here is that it will still add something in the way of extra weight and size to the camera. The main trade off is the fact that, once a cage is employed, the camera could be ergonomically compromised. Accordingly, if I'm wandering around a busy city I might extract my camera from its cage and just use it in its naked form, but then I do miss the chance to work with extra handles and so on.

USING A RIG

Investing in something more substantial that allows you to put your camera on your shoulder adds great support and enables you to use the camera for prolonged periods. This could be the method to use if you want static shots but are looking to add movement to make the footage more interesting. You can also add mics and perhaps a light or a monitor. Be warned though – this all comes at a cost to the weight. Carrying a heavy rig around is no fun and after a full day's shooting you'll felt the burn.

There are various supports you can invest in to take some of this strain. Easyrig is a popular system but expect to pay as much - if not more - than you will for the camera kit you're using. This suspends the camera over your head, and you can then take the strain into your hips via a harness. It's not for everyone though and I would suggest this would be for long, handheld shoots rather than a quick interview. It will also add to the set-up time needed to shoot, plus you'll have one or two extra bags to haul around.

ABOVE: Rick at work with his tripod set to a low down position. It's still fine to work from a static position if you want to produce a locked off shot.

We started off by mentioning tripods and you can find ways to get more flexibility out of these but you will probably need to look at a speciality video tripod and a fluid head. With stills it's not important how smooth the pan and tilt might be since you're recording static moments, but if there is any tension that could create jerky movement then motion will look terrible.

Tripod kits are a good way to get everything in one package and, much like stills tripods, a bespoke video product will come with the legs and a head. Sometimes they include a spreader, either low down or mid-way, and these are great for extra stability, although my preference is for one without for the sake of deployment speed. A major difference you'll see with video tripods is the way the head connects. It's usually a 'ball' which can be loosened and then the whole head adjusted to make levelling a lot easier for the filmmaker.

Carbon fibre legs are great for their lack of weight and I tend to favour tripods that have clip lock rather than twist lock on the legs, but again this is personal preference. The head is more important, and you can spend a lot of money getting a proper counterbalanced fluid head.

You should look to get one that can />

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> **“Look for a tripod that can take the weight of your camera plus at least 20% more since that will give you latitude to add a lens and perhaps other bits of kit and you’ll also have room to grow.”**

ABOVE: By working with a gimbal such as the Weebill S it’s possible to have complete flexibility and to add accessories, such as a monitor.

take the weight of your camera plus at least 20% more, which should give you enough latitude to add a lens and perhaps some other bits of kit, such as an auto prompt. Think ahead and don’t buy one that maxes out at the weight of your current camera since you’ll have no room to grow.

The more expensive heads have a counterbalance, which means it provides some torque when panning and tilting. This is important for when you want to move the shot and you’re shooting a take. The fluid head will give you smooth movement, but if you’re using a head that has little or no counterbalance it’s very hard to do a smooth and even tilt because you’ll be fighting the camera’s natural pull.

Manfrotto video tripods are a popular choice and the company has just launched a couple of great tripod kits - the 635 and 645 – which are super-fast to deploy and have more than enough headroom on the head load weight for a decent size rig. If you want to go straight in at the pro-end then you’re looking at the Sachtler Flowtech 75, but it will hurt your bank account a lot more! Ideally your cage will mount with a standard Arca-Swiss or Manfrotto style plate so you can pop it on and off your sticks as you please.

STARTING OUT

Initially I would strongly recommend shooting on sticks with some occasional hand held work once you get used to operating a camera this way. Smooth tripod moves are difficult to perfect but it’s worth investing time to get them right, since they’re really the fundamentals of shooting video. You want to avoid over complicating your shots and story and, by doing so, to become more embroiled in what kit you’re using rather than the actual shots you’re delivering.

The biggest culprit here is the gimbal. This is an accessory that everyone, myself included, loves and I personally have four different ones, designed for different cameras or situations. They’re great to use and have benefitted my filmmaking considerably, but I’ve noticed there’s a tendency these days for people to shoot everything this way and to then slow the footage down in edit to smooth out the shots. Remember, just because you have the kit doesn’t mean it has to be used all the time, no matter how excited you are to show it off!

The use of a gimbal is another skill you need to rehearse. Log on to YouTube and you’ll find plenty of examples of gimbal use that looks amazing, but start using one and it becomes obvious that the ‘silky smooth’ look isn’t something that comes straight out of the box. Gaining the skills you need takes practice.

LEFT: It’s also possible to use a gimbal that will work with a smartphone, giving you a cut-price b-cam.

The first challenge is to ‘balance’ a gimbal. Without mastering this step the motors won’t work properly and they could come under strain and potentially even burn out. You need to have the camera balanced, so that it’s in a ‘neutral’ position before you switch it on, and if you change lenses then you’ll need to balance it again. Once you’ve arrived at this state then it’s safe to fire your gimbal up and get going.

Usually there’s a load of features that are unlocked with an accompanying smartphone app. My tip here is to ignore this initially. Get practising walking around with it, because this is the hardest part. There’s no stabilisation for the ‘z’ axis, namely your arm, and most people tend to walk with a natural bounce. You need to try to counteract this, and it’s often referred to />

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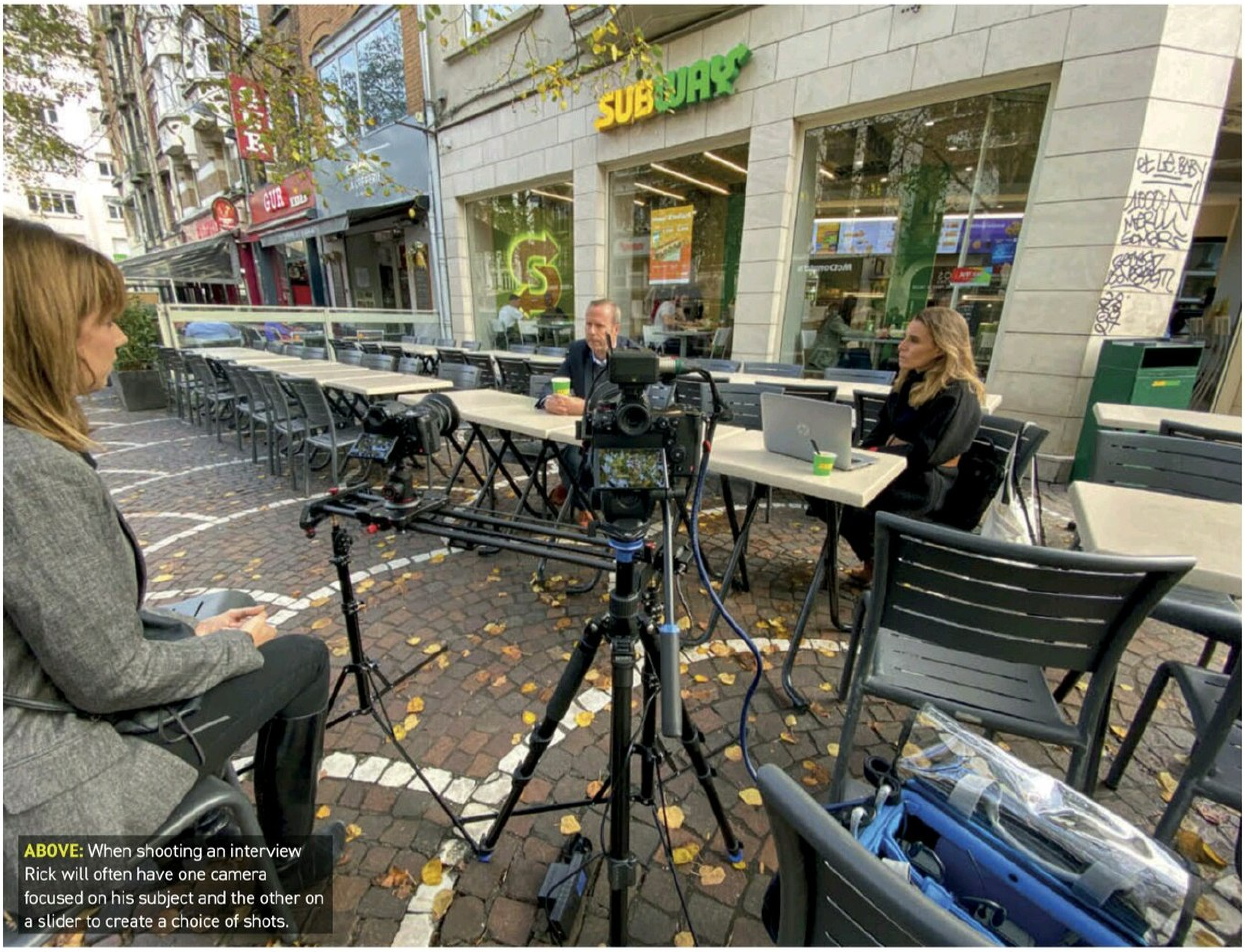

ABOVE: When shooting an interview Rick will often have one camera focused on his subject and the other on a slider to create a choice of shots.

as 'walking like a ninja,' while I like to add 'treading on eggshells'. Walking heel to toe, and with a small stoop/crouch should help, although not fully mitigate, the bounce.

As well as this you need to think about the focusing. Some cameras have better AF in video than others but I would suggest shooting with a nice wide lens and keeping the focus on manual and aperture at about f/8 to try to keep most of the scene in focus. Otherwise you'll be trying to focus and walk like a ninja at the same time, which won't look pretty and could be tricky for a newbie.

The final piece of kit I have with me is a camera slider where, much as the name implies, the camera travels up and down a track. Again, I don't over-use it but it helps me add more dynamic and highly controlled panning shots when I'm shooting an interview. You need to practice moving the camera at an even pace for the best results.

To return to what I was talking about at the start of this feature, I almost always work with two cameras when I'm shooting an interview. One camera is static - so you can use your photo tripod for this – while the other is on the slider, moving back and forth the whole time but keeping the subject in the centre of the frame. This gives me a choice of two shots to pick from and makes any longer pieces of interview a little more visually interesting as a result.

> **"When you're walking with a gimbal there is a tendency to add a natural bounce and to counteract this you need to master 'walking like a ninja' and with a small stoop and crouch as well."**

If you don't have two cameras you could consider sticking your smartphone onto a tripod and your main camera on either another tripod or a slider. You could then convert your phone footage to black and white so, once it's all synced up afterwards, you can have the pick of two very different shots. Once could be a tight close up and the other wider. Crashing into a close-up can be a powerful way to bring a story to life.

There's really not a right or wrong way to go about keeping your shots steady. What I would always say is that keeping it simple is a good way to go. Get the shots and use the edit to tell the story and the narrative. If you don't get the basics right and end up with unusable shots because they're too wobbly it will cause endless headaches, so this really is a fundamental area to master. PP

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NEXT MONTH:

How to market your movies. We look at who your potential audience might be, how to advertise your new skills and what to charge for this extra service.

DEMYSTIFYING FILMMAKING

PART TWO

Filmmaking Jargon Busting

© ADAM DUCKWORTH

WORDS AND PICTURES JIM MARKS

AS MORE AND MORE professional photographers are finding themselves having to consider moving into commercial filmmaking to respond to demand from clients, the pressure is on to understand all of the terms that differentiate this sector from straightforward still shooting.

These days much of the kit might be the same, as manufacturers tune into the fact that hybrid products will have a more universal appeal. In particular, cameras such as Panasonic's S-Series and GH models are particularly well suited to producing high quality stills alongside video footage that can meet even the most exacting professional requirements and there are, of course, lots of other models from other manufacturers also available.

There is more to filmmaking, of course, than simply switching the dial on the camera to the video mode and firing away, and there is undeniably a learning curve involved. This is the aim of this series, to walk you through, as a photographer turned filmmaker myself, some of the areas that could potentially be the most challenging and to take some of the mystery out of the terms that you'll encounter at the outset.

You can also check out my short films on Instagram to help make things clearer still. Good luck and happy filmmaking!

VIDEO:

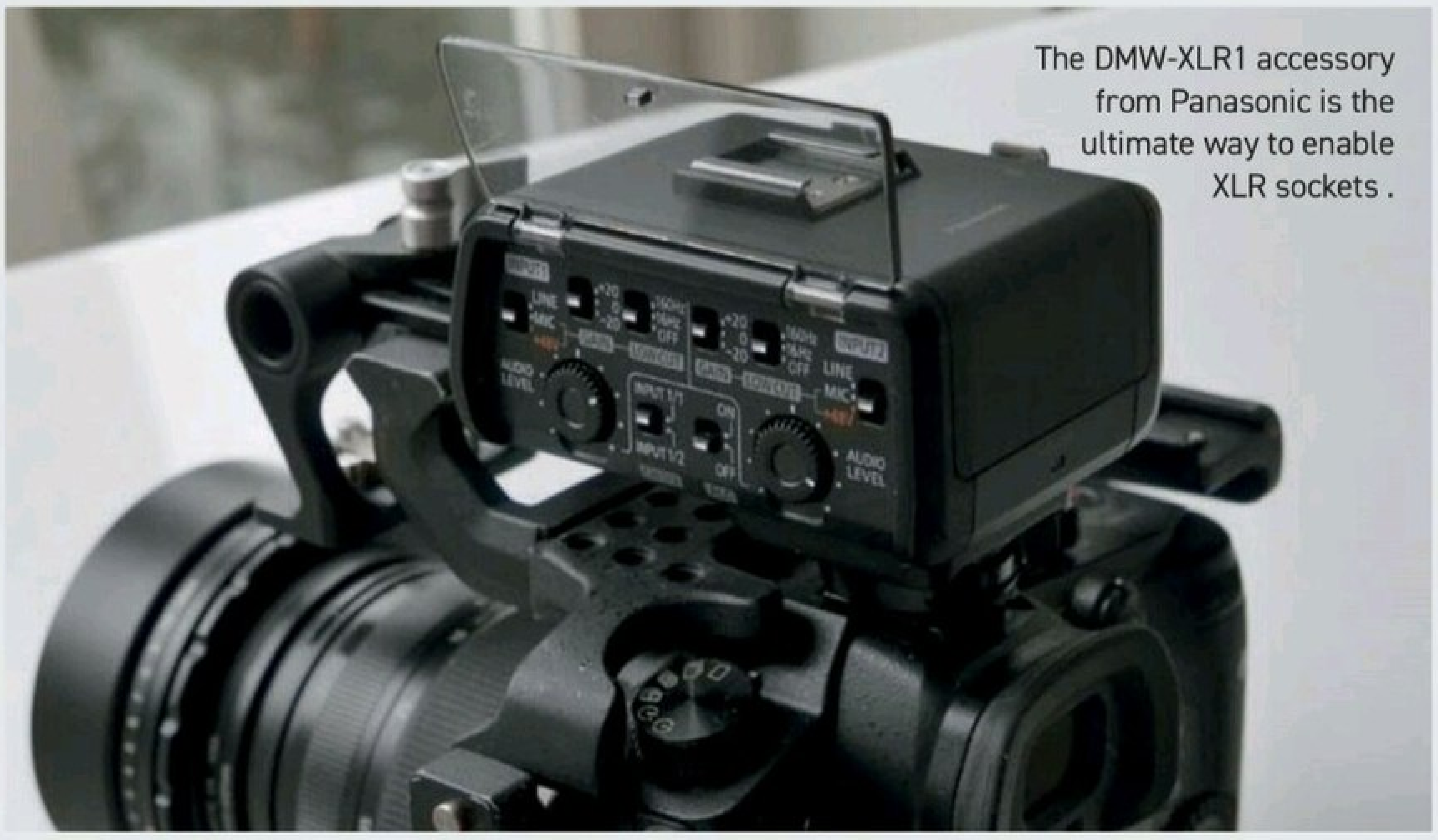
Each of these five steps on demystifying filmmaking has been made into an Instagram video, which you can check out now at / www.professionalphoto.online.

6 XLR ADAPTORS

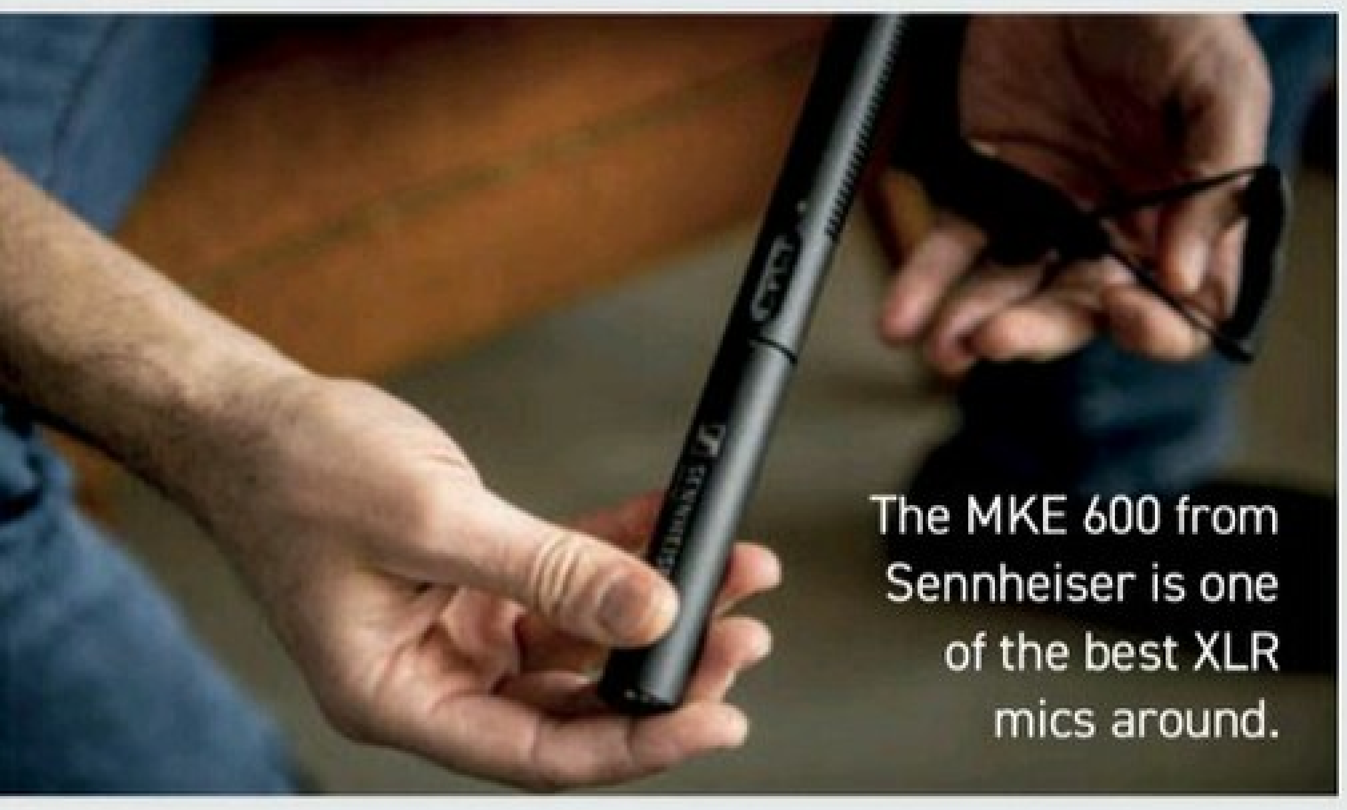
AN XLR CONNECTOR is a form of solid, lockable connector primarily found on professional audio and video equipment. It's not something that would normally be found on any sort of mirrorless camera, since these primarily rely on the much smaller, less secure 3.5mm jack for audio connections.

While you can achieve good quality sound using a jack, if you're looking to be professionally-minded about your audio then XLR really is the only way to go. The top-of-the-range pro-minded microphones pretty much all come in this fitting and it's way more stable, less prone to crackle and a much more reliable form of connection. So, what can you do if this is the way that you want to go and you don't have that kind of connection on your camera?

To the rescue come 3.5mm jack to XLR adaptors, available from a series of manufacturers such as Sennheiser at a wide range of price points and quality levels. However, one of the very best accessories on the market, which totally solves the connectivity issue, is the DMW -XLR1 from Panasonic, which first appeared when the MFT GH5 was launched. This is a small, slip on box that slides and locks


The DMW-XLR1 accessory from Panasonic is the ultimate way to enable XLR sockets .

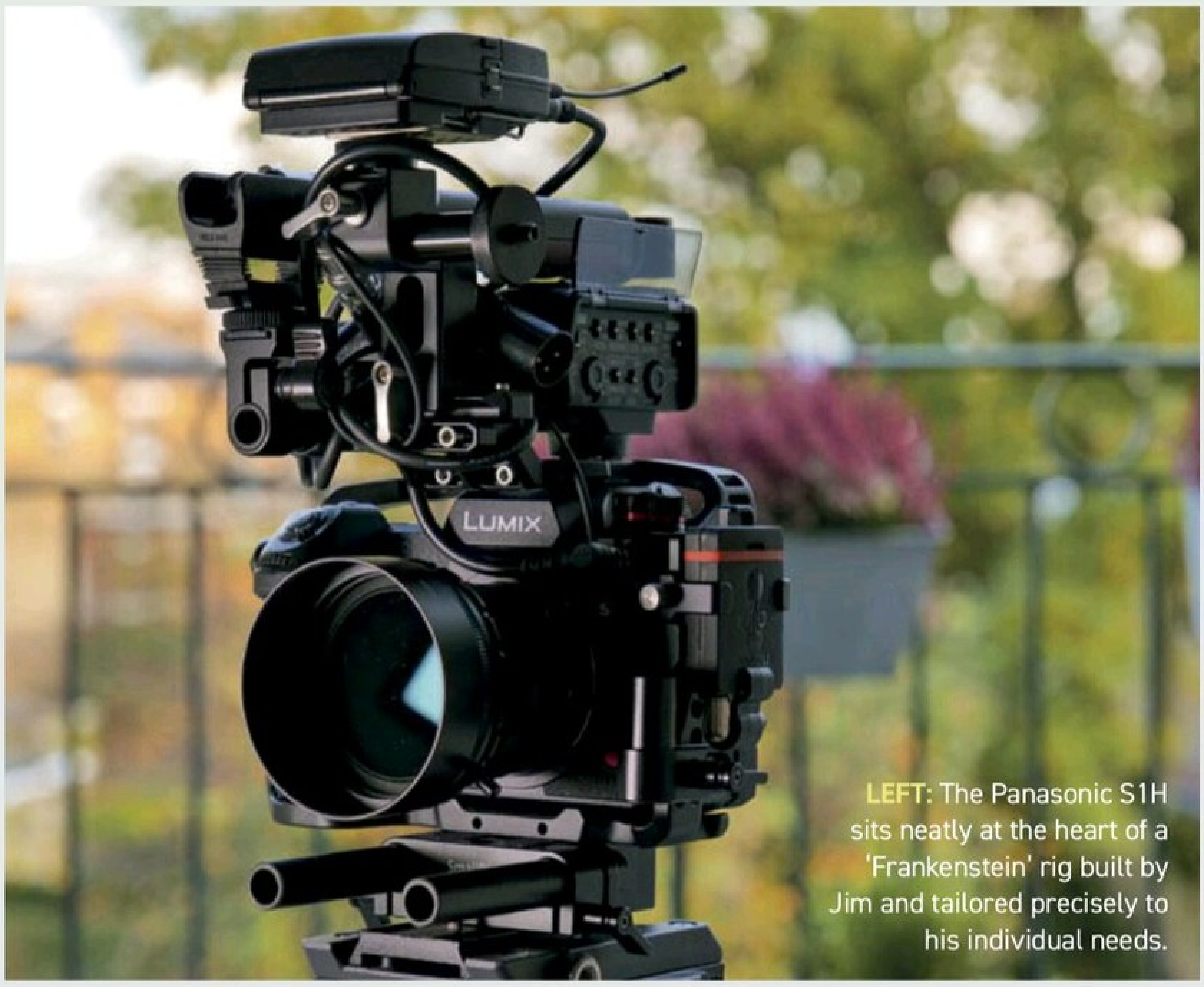
Hybrid operator Jim Marks concludes his short series where he's setting out to de-mystify some of the terms that those moving into filmmaking for the first time might find confusing.


The MKE 600 from Sennheiser is one of the best XLR mics around.

onto the camera's hot shoe. It offers two separate professional balanced XLR audio inputs for the camera body, which allows the user to then use a wide range of pro audio products. Using a clever power pin inside the hotshot, you can power the unit from the camera body, a real blessing for the times when you're in a rush and have forgotten to pack extra batteries!

The audio tracks are laid straight onto your footage in-camera, avoiding any need to sync in post, and the adaptor packs improved pre amps and Line (for external feed), MIC and MIC 48V powered inputs. You also have the ability to tailor the gain level sensitivity to individual mics, and adjust low cut and ALC filters. This device also enables 96ktz 24 bit audio recording.

For me this small accessory is the ultimate missing link that enables cameras like the S1H and GH5 to really punch above their weight. As you progress further into your filmmaking career you'll swiftly realise the essential fact that good sound is every bit as important as the visuals and it's great to see a manufacturer responding to that need.


LEFT: The Panasonic S1H sits neatly at the heart of a 'Frankenstein' rig built by Jim and tailored precisely to his individual needs.

7

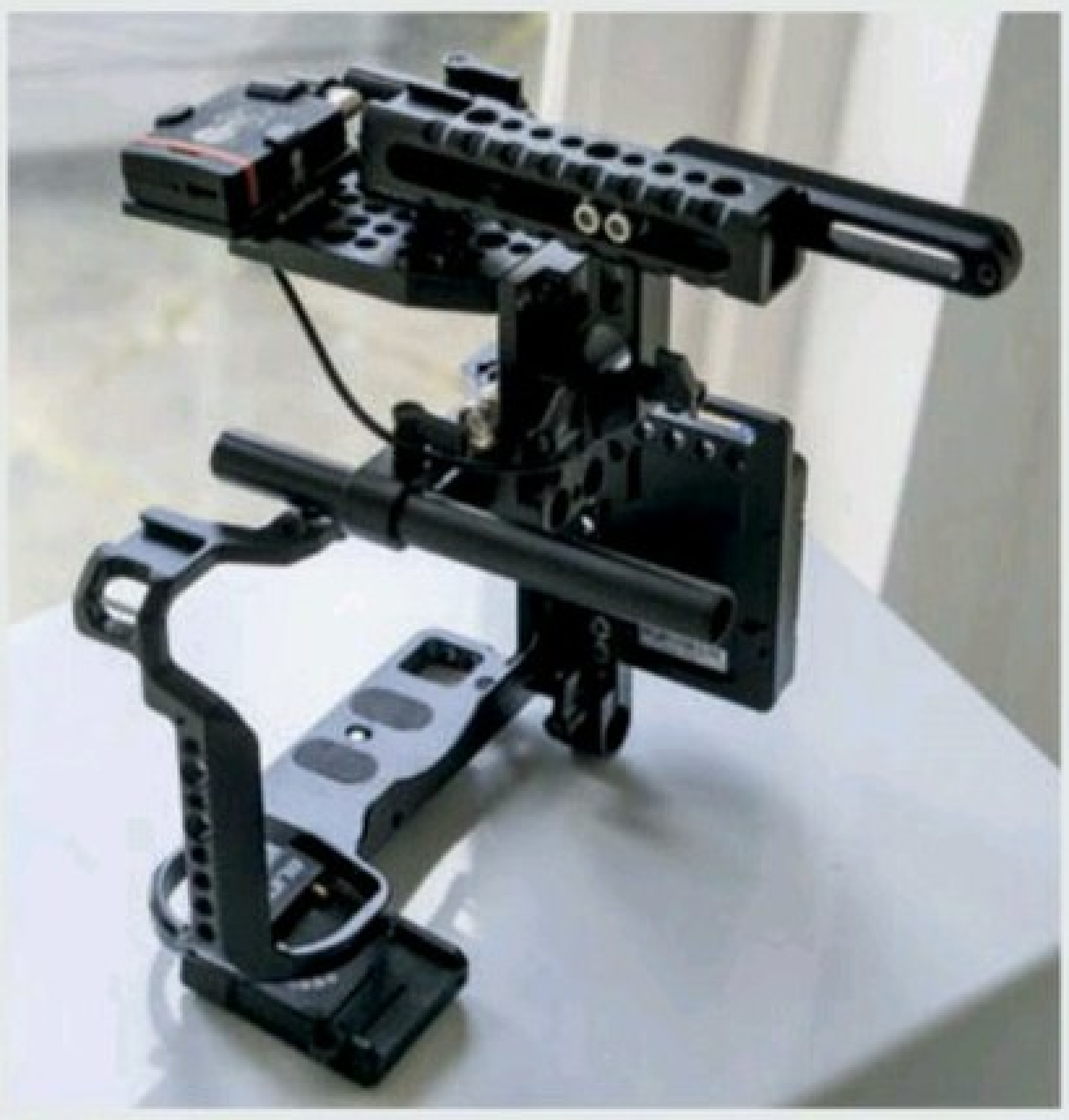
RIGS AND HOW YOU USE THEM

WHEN YOU FIRST BUY that shiny new camera and get it out of the box, what comes next? When we talk about a rig we are generally referring to a cage or support system that fits to the camera body, allowing you to add the accessories and features you require. It's a very personal approach, as what works for me might not work for you and vice versa.

The importance of a rig that suits your workflow and subject matter is that it enables your filming. It should makes things easier, protect your camera and allow you to move faster. It's also something that can only truly be discovered through trial and error.

While many manufacturers offer over-the-counter solutions, inevitably the most intuitive examples are what's commonly known as 'Frankenstein Rigs,' ones that have been pieced together from a number of different sources and that have been designed to solve real world shooting problems. Can you swap the handles? Is it possible to mount your audio receivers or follow focus in different positions? Sometimes you can go too far and add too much weight in the wrong places. What if I need to power either the camera or accessories with a larger battery or fit the whole package on a gimbal?

I would name the process as actually productionising the camera to make it fit for purpose. It should be a fun thing to do, and very soon you'll end up with a large box of comedy shaped brackets and pieces of grip. Don't throw any of them away since you'll definitely need them for the next camera or project down the line.


ABOVE: Another one of my purpose-built rigs that features at its heart a 'cage,' around which many accessories can be bolted on.

8 RESOLUTION

WE LIVE IN A WORLD of Ks, such as 4K, 6K and 8K, massive resolutions that are being sold and pushed to us as computing power rises exponentially. However, set against this, almost all of my films are sent across as 1080 HD masters, and most of what we watch on our televisions is 720 HD that's been upscaled through the internet. So how can we understand the resolutions better and in what way do they effect our film making?

If you think of filmmaking as a process, then we can divide it into three basic sections, namely Capture, Edit and Output. The first of these, Capture, is pushing the red button and filming. Edit is where you cut and assemble your project, while Output is the choice you make as to the quality, size and compression of the film you send.

Rec Quality
MOV, Full-frame
4096x2160(17:9),25.00p
Image Sensor Output 25.00p
422/10bit/LongGOP
150Mbps
LPCM (96kHz/24bit)
HLG available
add to list
DISP. Filtering

LEFT: The higher end hybrid cameras offer a wide choice of resolutions and shooting at the higher ones gives you more flexibility when editing.

And this is the true value of higher resolutions: the power of choice and the power of options in the middle section, the edit. If you film in 4K (or 6k for that matter) you create possibilities for the editor. It's possible to reframe and stabilise, even add a digital move, all without loss of quality. You can also select multiple views or crops from the same frame and, in short, you have resolution to burn and that allows you to solve all these issues.

The other tangible benefit of filming in higher resolutions is oversampling. By filming in 4 or 6K for a 1080 HD film you'll enjoy much greater colour depth and

9 COLOUR PROFILES

COLOUR PROFILES ARE a decision you make right after you've decided the frame rate for your film. Unlike photography, where it's possible for an image's colour to be changed with ease, with video it's much better practice to have made this creative choice at the start.

As a rule we tend to not compress the dynamic range and colour of our films in-camera. This is due to the fact it's very hard to gain dynamic range in post but easy to remove it. So ideally we're looking for a colour profile that's on the flat side without hard blacks while being gentle on our highlights. It helps to think of profiles almost as though they were winter coats sitting on a rack: you pick and choose the one that most suits you!

The Lumix cameras offer a full range of profiles that offer a sub menu within them, which also allows you to fine tune their properties. For example, if I'm using the Cine D profile on the S1H I'll always have the sharpening turned right down and will have made other personal tweaks to contrast and taken steps to even out noise reduction. This is where testing becomes so important. What I like might not be to your taste, so it's vital that you experiment with colour in-camera to get the blend you prefer. I will then export these settings across multiple cameras, so if I'm using different camera bodies on the same project I'll know that they will all intercut and match in the timeline.

The one exception to this is using a LOG profile, which is a very flat theme with the widest dynamic and tonal range. This requires colouring after the shoot in the edit, so it might not suit jobs that have a fast turnaround time.

Cinelike D2
-1
-3
+1
+2.5
±0
DISP. Save
Set
MENU /SET
DISP.

LEFT: Use your experience and choose the colour profile that most suits the job.

> "If you film in 4 or 6K you create possibilities for the editor and it enables them to reframe and stabilise, even to add a digital move, all without suffering any loss of quality"

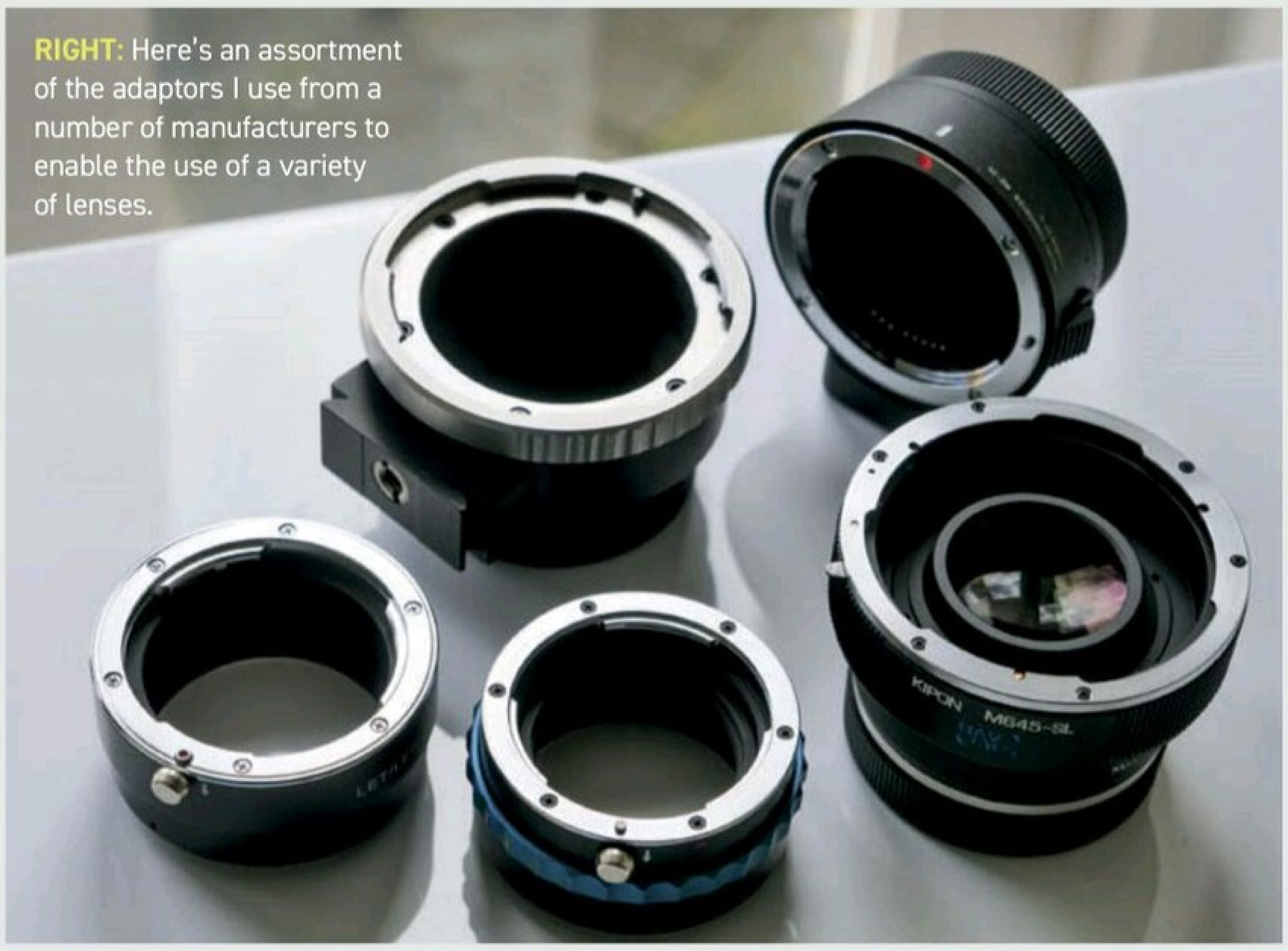
dynamic range. Your footage will be more elastic and you'll be able to manipulate the colours and exposure to a greater degree. One note of caution, however, is that higher resolutions must always be balanced by the data rates they use. Filming at higher resolutions is no fun if you need to buy a hard drive a day! Panasonic is known for offering a wide range of resolutions at varying data rates, a key distinction that allows you to choose the correct one for your project.

TIME TO GO HYBRID?

As what constitutes the traditional photographic sector becomes ever more difficult to distinguish, the time is right to take a long hard look at the services you're offering and to make a decision on whether or not to start adding video-production services alongside your stills side.

Jim Marks made that call nearly a decade ago now and has discovered that the filmmaking side of his business is now just as important, if not more so these days, than his stills work, and those who don't at least check out the opportunities that are out there could be missing out in the long run.

Cameras such as Panasonic's GH and S-Series offer great stills as well as motion, so are well worth checking out!



RIGHT: Here's an assortment of the adaptors I use from a number of manufacturers to enable the use of a variety of lenses.

10 LENS MOUNTS AND ADAPTORS

ONE OF THE MAIN attractions of the mirrorless camera systems, be they the Lumix GH5 or S1H, is the short flange distance of the sensor to the lens mount. This enables a whole range of adaptors to be used on the mount, to open up a potentially vast array of lenses.

On the S1H in particular this is really exciting, as I have a full frame cinema camera with a whole bundle of creative lens options beyond the existing L-mount native glass. Canon EF glass can be used, for example, in tandem with the Sigma MC-21 adaptor, which allows stabilisation and aperture control. Nikon and Leica R and M mount lens are possible with simple manual connectors, which brings a lot of low cost options into play.

I also have a Novoflex PL to L adapting mount, which allows me to attach any PL cinema lens, but my current favourite accessory has to be my Kippon Speedbooster Mamiya 645 to L mount. This is fabulous, as I can utilise very cost effective medium format glass, with a very dreamy wide open look.

A wise person once said that lenses are the new film stock, and it's true that these days there really is no limit to the things you can try out. Using these manual lenses with the S1H I don't even have to give up my stabilisation in-camera. You can build up to 14 pre-sets of focal length, whether they are full frame or S35, and then save them to click into action when you swap your glass over. This is truly the prefect combination of high and low tech for the filmmakers out there.

For more information on Jim Marks:
/ www.niceanarchy.com

FOLLOW PROFESSIONAL PHOTO ON INSTAGRAM

Head over to the Professional Photo Instagram page to watch Jim Marks' final five jargon busting videos which accompany this series.

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Focus Merging for maximum sharpness

If you're working with a macro subject and are struggling to achieve the depth of field that you need then a solution could be to use the Focus Merging facility offered by Affinity Photo…

WORDS AND IMAGES MATTY GRAHAM

PROFESSIONAL photographers know that if you're taking on a job that involves shooting macro images you could face issues with depth of field, which will become ever narrower the closer you approach to your subject. If you leave things as they are then it could end up being a case of having to make a judgement call regarding which areas of your image are pin sharp and which ones might be allowed to just become soft as the focus drops away.

However, there is a software solution that can be employed to create a much deeper depth of field which, in the Affinity Photo programme, is known as focus merging, but which can also be referred to as focus stacking. This is a technique where a sequence of images is shot very quickly, with each frame having a focus point that differs slightly, and the trick is to then merge all of these seamlessly together so that every part of the tiny subject is captured in focus.

Many cameras now come with the rapid shooting feature built in, with a few also completing the merging in camera as an all-in-one process. However, if your subject is static enough and your camera is held rigidly on a solid tripod, it is also possible to achieve this effect by shooting a selection of images and then manually refocusing by a small amount between exposures. Once you've shot your image sequence you can download your files to the computer and let Affinity Photo do the hard work.

STEP ONE

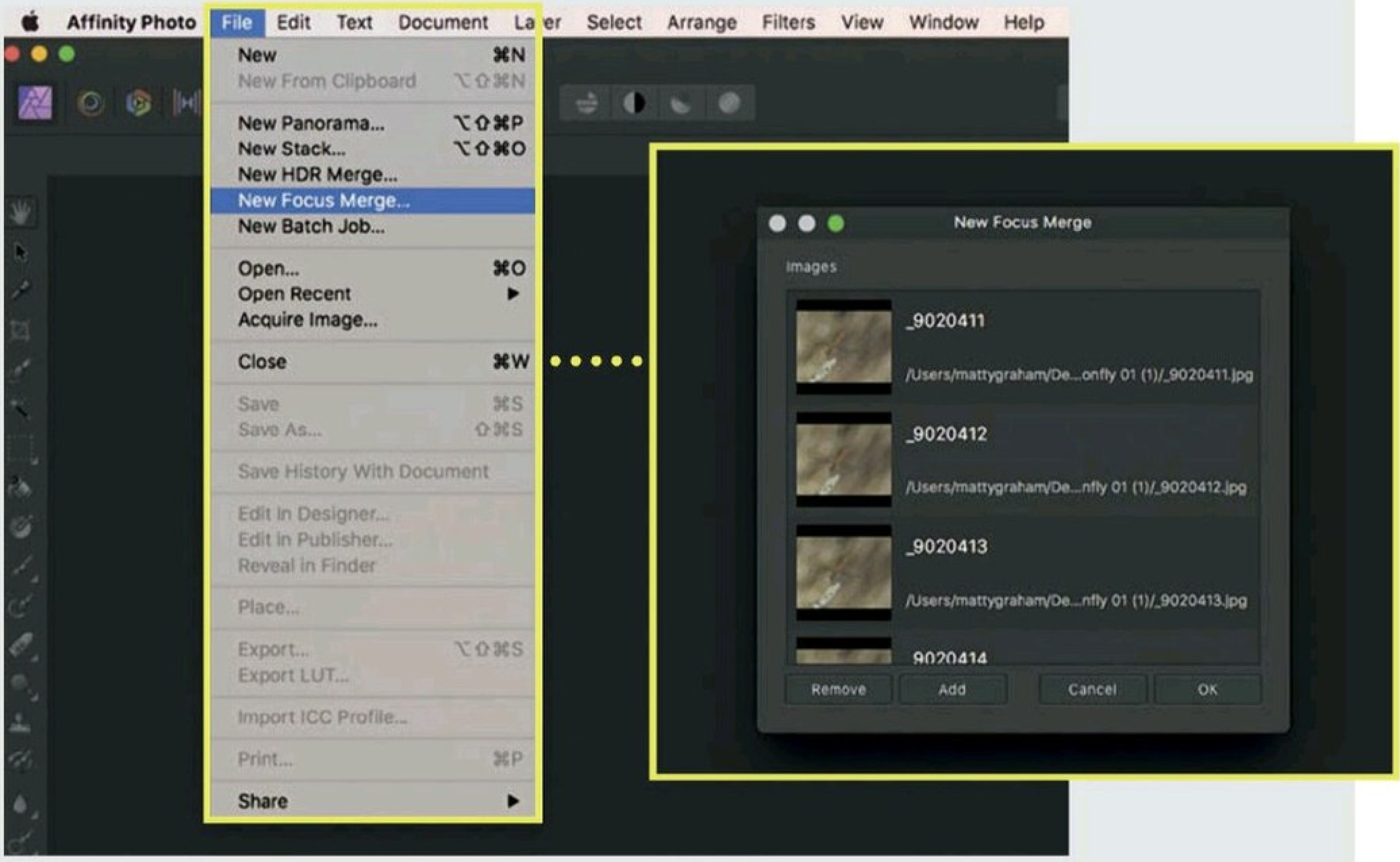
GROUP YOUR IMAGERY

To make life a lot easier, before you even open the Affinity Photo software place all the images you'd like to merge into one folder. Name it something like Focus Merge and make it accessible on your desktop or external hard drive.

STEP TWO

SELECT YOUR IMAGES

With the Affinity Photo software open, the first step is to select the images you want to merge together. To do this, head up to the top of the interface and then select File, before scrolling down to select New Focus Merge. When the Dialogue box appears, click on Add and select the files you wish to merge before hitting Open.


Affinity Photo
File
Edit
Text
Document
Layer
Select
Arrange
Filters
View
Window
Help
New ⌘N
New From Clipboard ⌥⇧⌘N
New Panorama... ⌥⇧⌘P
New Stack... ⌥⇧⌘O
New HDR Merge...
New Focus Merge...
New Batch Job...
Open... ⌘O
Open Recent
Acquire Image...
Close ⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save History With Document
Edit in Designer...
Edit in Publisher...
Reveal in Finder
Place...
Export... ⌥⇧⌘S
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Print... ⌘P
Share
New Focus Merge
Images
Remove
Add
Cancel
OK

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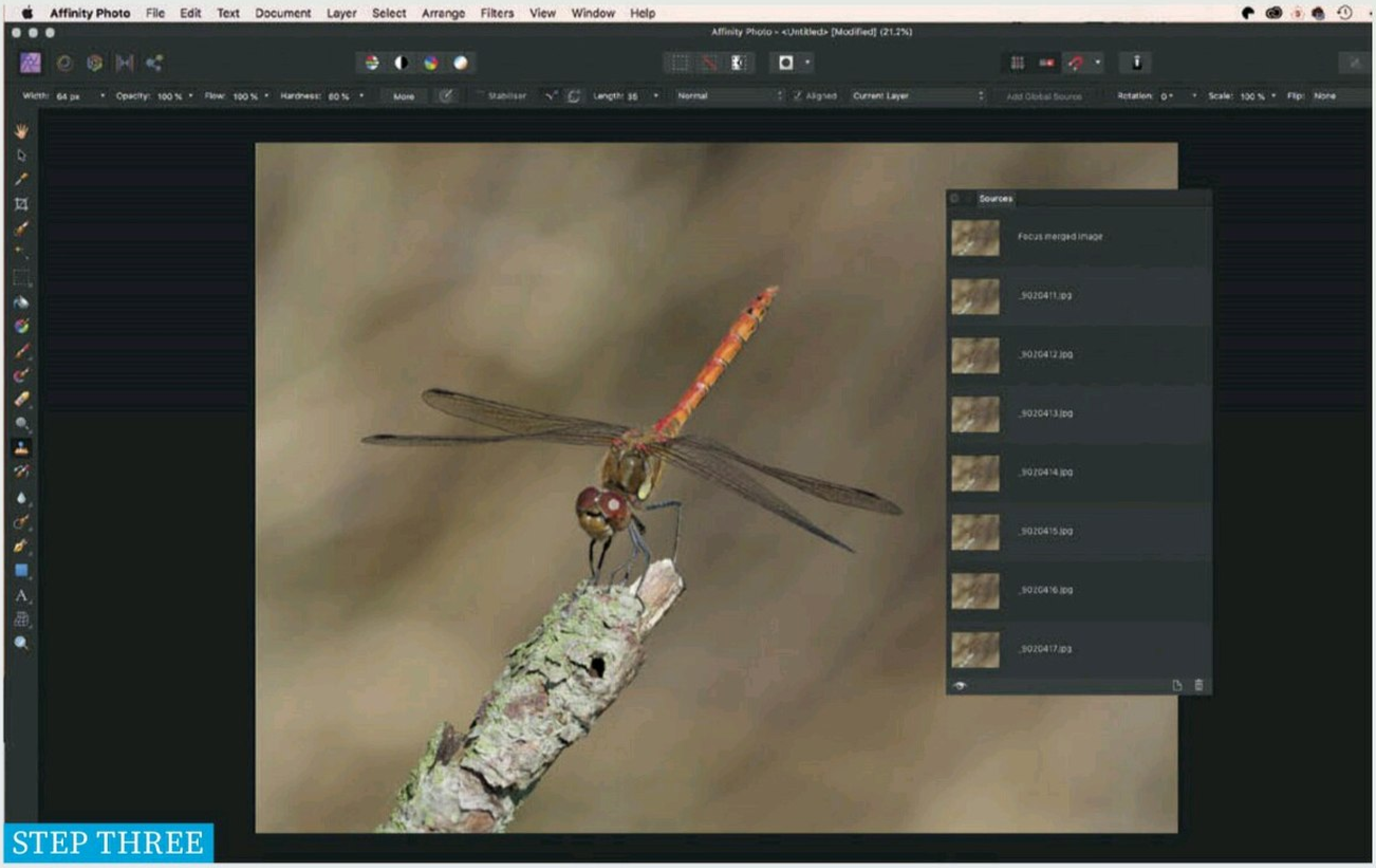
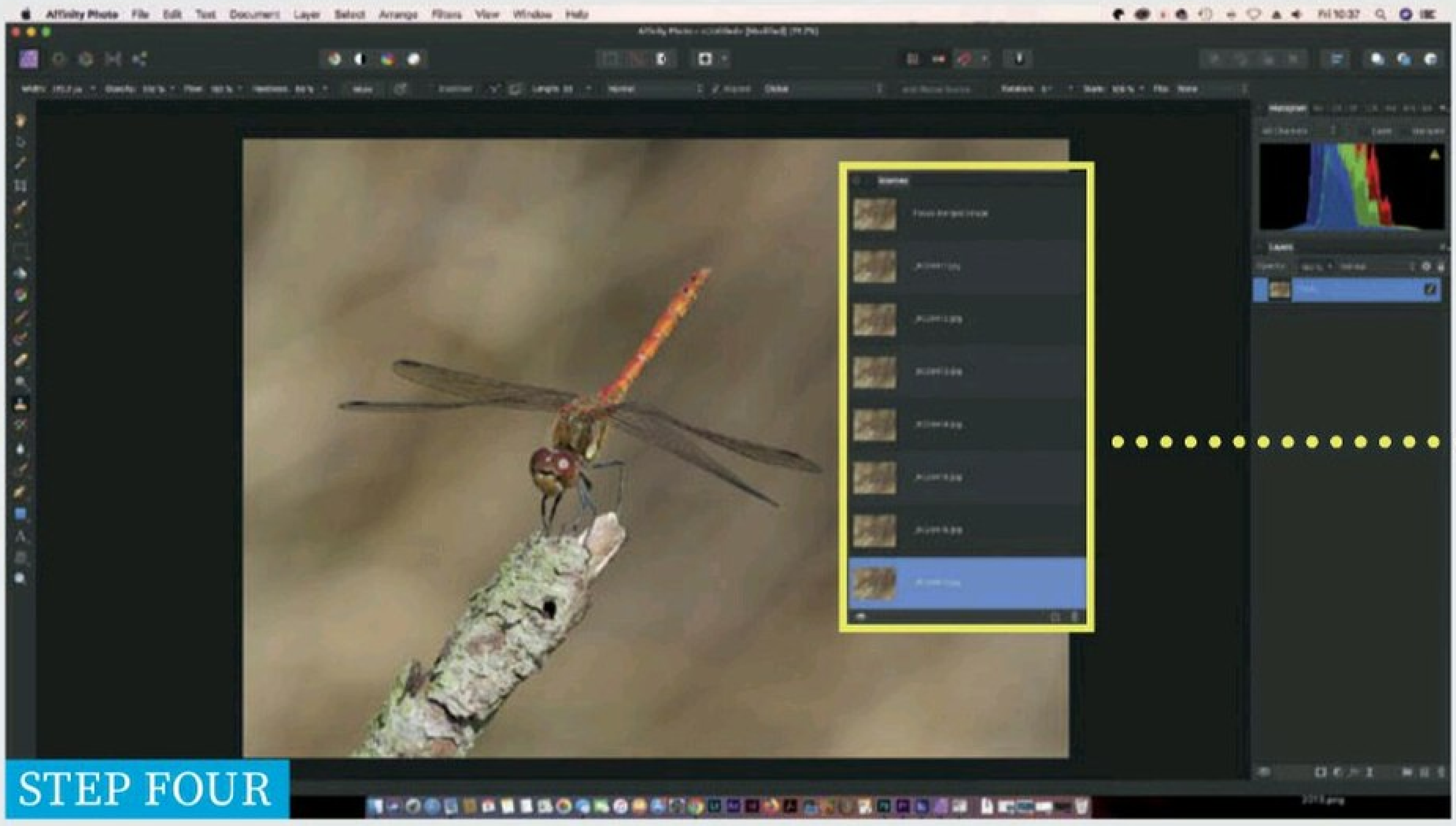

Affinity Photo File Edit Text Document Layer Select Arrange Filters View Window Help
Sources
Focus merged image
_9020411.jpg
_9020412.jpg
_9020413.jpg
_9020414.jpg
_9020415.jpg
_9020416.jpg
_9020417.jpg

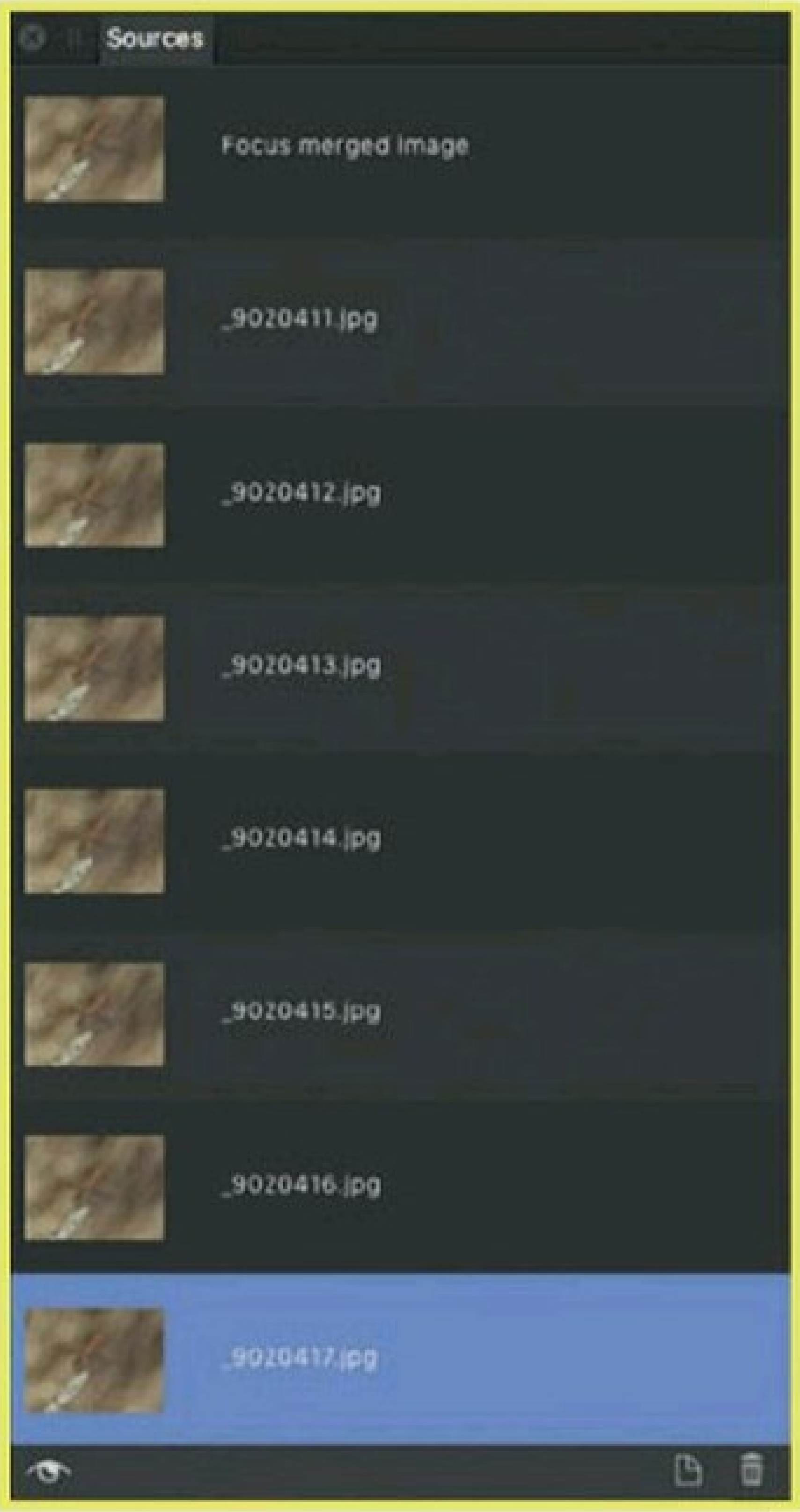
STEP THREE

REVIEW THE IMAGE

Affinity Photo will now work its magic and merge the files together into one final frame. This final frame may not be the perfect result that you want however, so it's worth examining the image to see if there are any areas of out-of-focus blur still remaining on the image.

ABOVE: Blend together a sequence of images focused at fractionally different points to achieve extra depth of field.

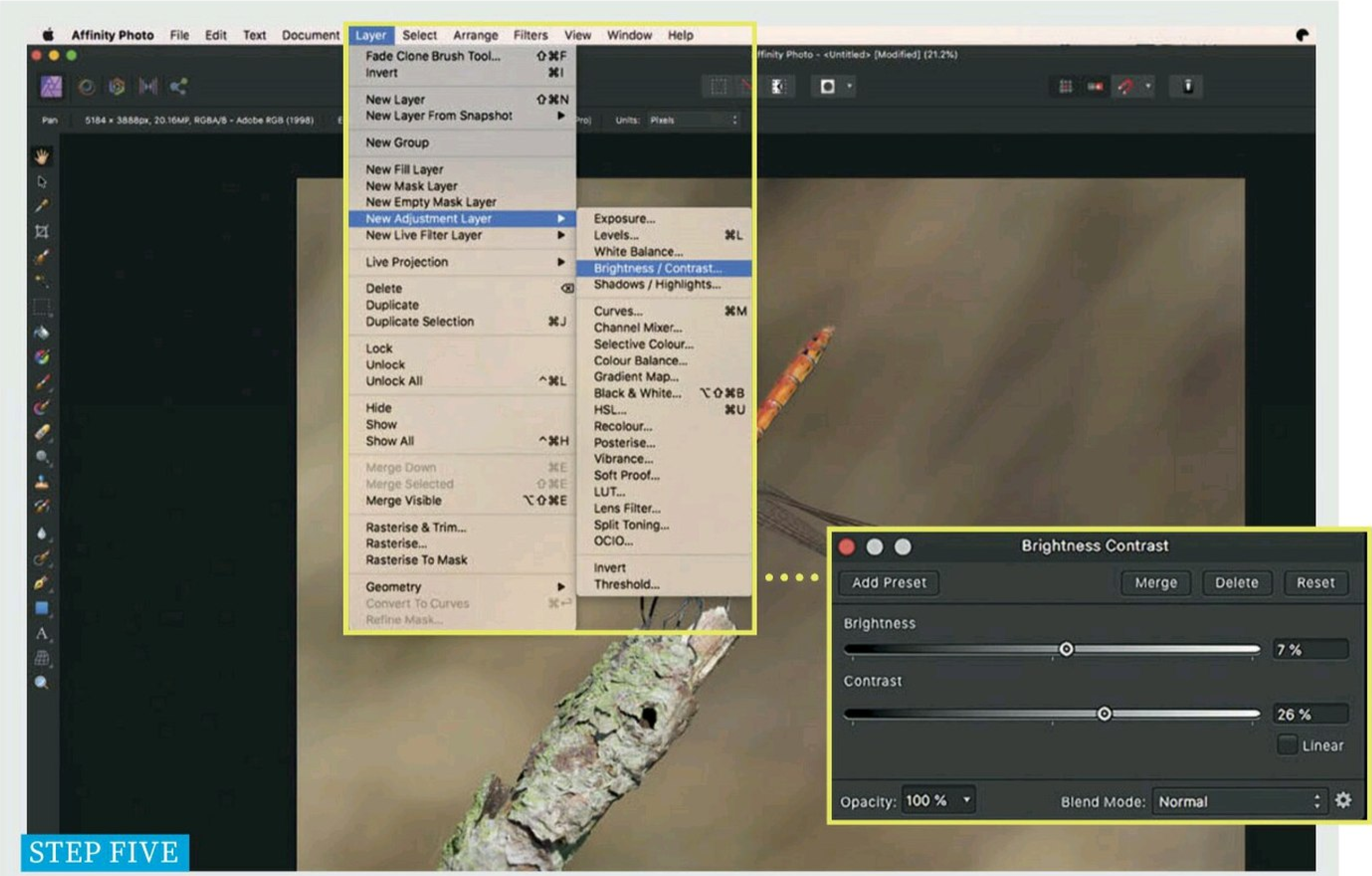



Sources
Focus merged image
_9020411.jpg
_9020412.jpg
_9020413.jpg
_9020414.jpg
_9020415.jpg
_9020416.jpg
_9020417.jpg

STEP FOUR

CLONE FROM THE SOURCES BAR

You'll see all the files listed in the Sources panel. If you see an area that needs fixing, select the Clone tool from the Tool bar and then head to the Sources panel and click on the Toggle Source Preview icon. Select a file where the area in question is acceptably sharp then click back on the Toggle preview and brush over it with the Clone tool, changing the size of the brush using square bracket keys if necessary.


Affinity Photo
File
Edit
Text
Document
Layer
Select
Arrange
Filters
View
Window
Help
Fade Clone Brush Tool... ⇧⌘F
Invert ⌘I
New Layer ⇧⌘N
New Layer From Snapshot
New Group
New Fill Layer
New Mask Layer
New Empty Mask Layer
New Adjustment Layer
New Live Filter Layer
Live Projection
Delete
Duplicate
Duplicate Selection ⌘J
Lock
Unlock
Unlock All ^⌘L
Hide
Show
Show All ^⌘H
Merge Down ⌘E
Merge Selected ⇧⌘E
Merge Visible ⌥⇧⌘E
Rasterise & Trim...
Rasterise...
Rasterise To Mask
Geometry
Convert To Curves
Refine Mask...
Exposure...
Levels... ⌘L
White Balance...
Brightness / Contrast...
Shadows / Highlights...
Curves... ⌘M
Channel Mixer...
Selective Colour...
Colour Balance...
Gradient Map...
Black & White... ⌥⇧⌘B
HSL... ⌘U
Recolour...
Posterise...
Vibrance...
Soft Proof...
LUT...
Lens Filter...
Split Toning...
OCIO...
Invert
Threshold...
Brightness Contrast
Add Preset
Merge
Delete
Reset
Linear

Brightness: 7 %
Contrast: 26 %
Opacity: 100 %
Blend Mode: Normal

STEP FIVE

ADD AN ADJUSTMENT LAYER

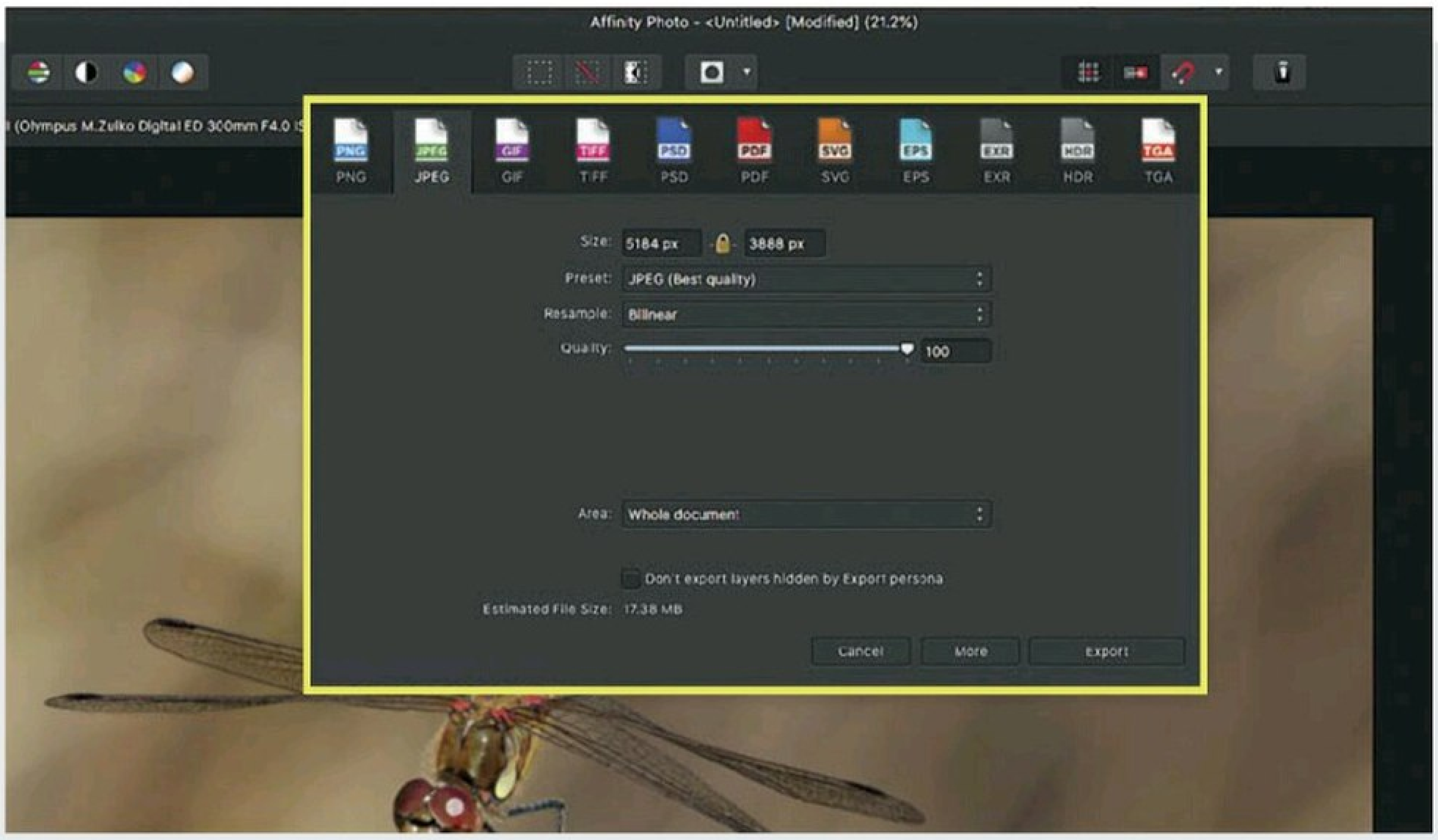
With the focus sorted, you can then make additional improvements to the image by adding an Adjustment Layer. To do this, simply head up to File, scroll down to New Adjustment Layer and then select which adjustment you'd like to add, such as Brightness/Contrast. When the dialogue box appears, adjust the sliders until you're happy with the result.

> "You can make additional improvements to the image by adding an adjustment layer, and this is done by using sliders to make changes to areas such as Brightness/Contrast."

STEP SIX

EXPORT THE FILE

That's it, you're all done with your Focus Merge, so all that remains is to export the file. To do this, head to the top of the interface, select File and then scroll down to Export. A dialogue box will appear enabling you to save the image in a choice of file formats.


Affinity Photo - <Untitled> [Modified] (21.2%)
(Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 300mm F4.0 IS
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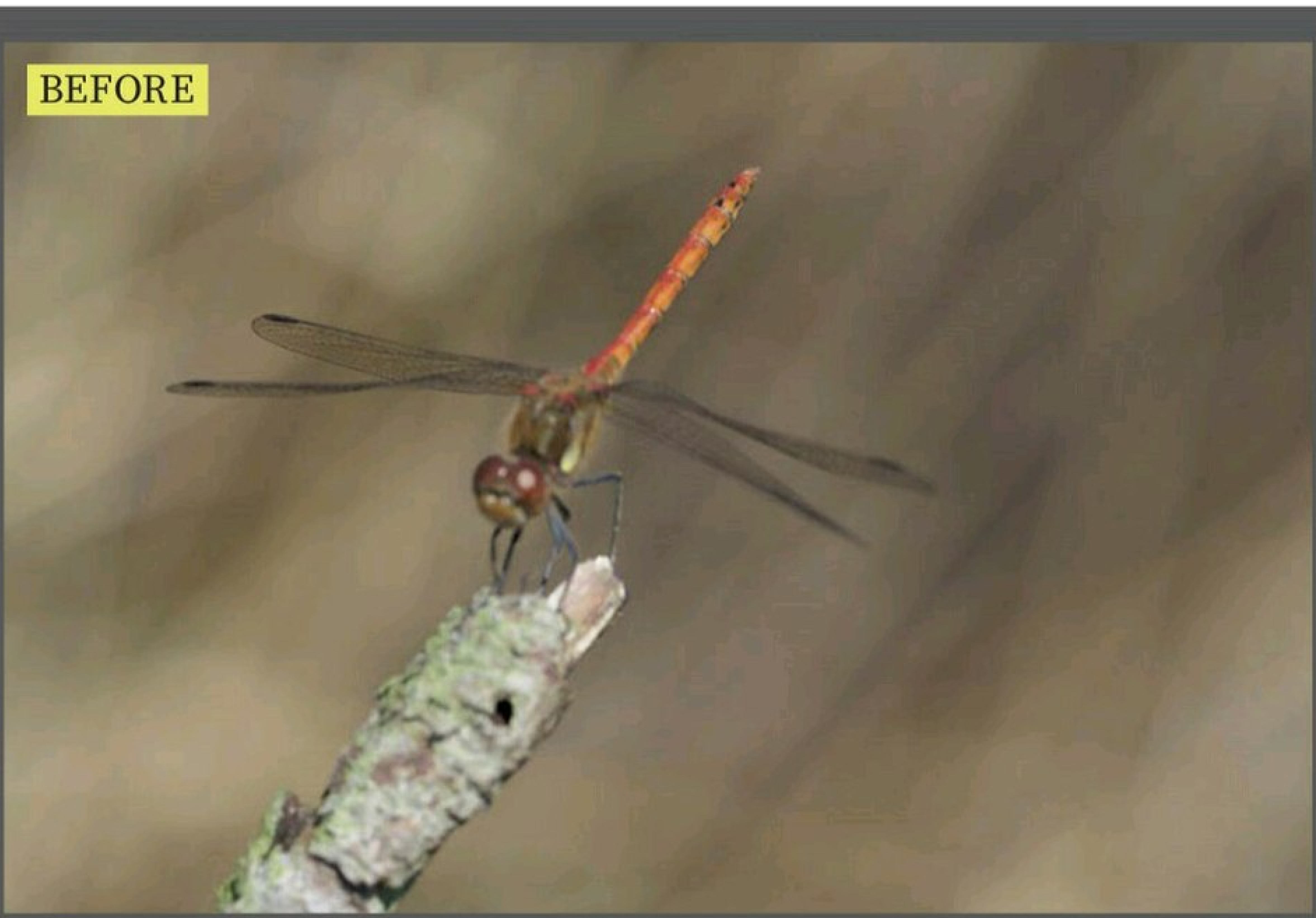
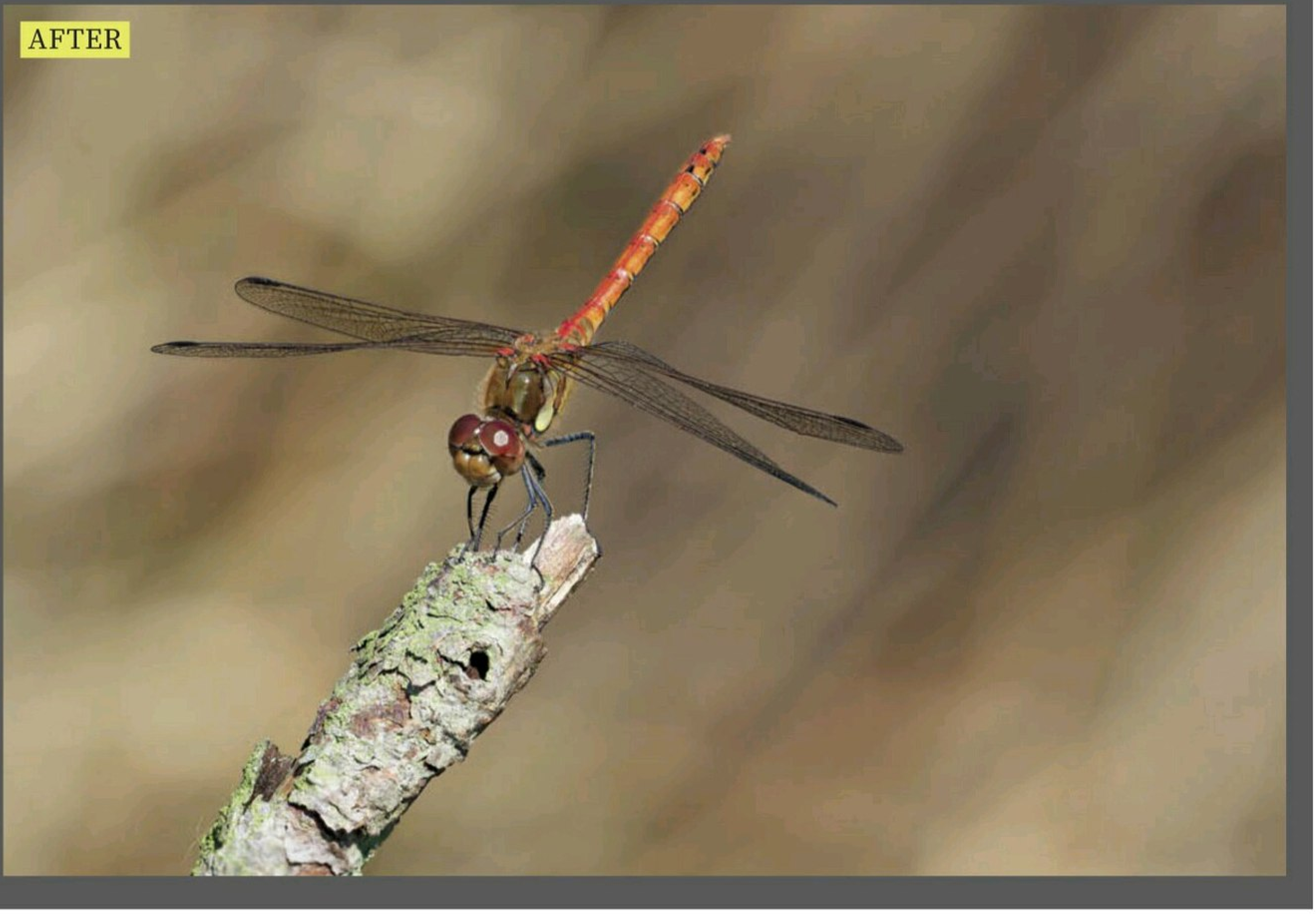
Size: 5184 px 3888 px
Preset: JPEG (Best quality)
Resample: Bilinear
Quality: 100
Area: Whole document
☐ Don't export layers hidden by Export persona
Estimated File Size: 17.38 MB

RIGHT: When you shoot a macro image there will be a tiny depth of field that might not be enough .

BELOW: If your subject is static you can shoot a sequence focused at different points and combine them with Affinity Photo's Focus Merge





VIDEO:

Now head to the Professional Photo website at www.professionalphoto.online for an exclusive video where Matty talks through the techniques covered here in real time.

AFFINITY Photo

More information: / https://affinity.serif.com

NEXT MONTH:

We take a look at panoramas and work with Affinity Photo to take a series of component images and turn them into a glorious and seamless sweeping vista fit for professional use!

Game Changers

Lisa Devlin

Every wedding photographer has one special image that has defined their careers and Lisa set out to ask a selection of those who have most influenced her to nominate their stand out shots.

WHEN I HEARD THAT Professional Photo was planning a special wedding section I immediately wanted to talk about the photographers I consider to be legends.

Some have been a personal influence on me and have directly affected the directions that I've taken. I came across Emma Case in 2010, for example, and thought that her approach was so incredibly fresh while, when I saw a wedding that Jeff Newsom shot in my home country of Northern Ireland, it opened up my mind to the fact that the images don't have to be entirely reflective of the environment in which they were shot.

Then there are photographers that just make the whole thing cool, like Janneke Storm who broke the internet with a wedding in Vegas and every bride who has worn sequins since or anyone who finds themselves holding a smoke bomb at a wedding has Janneke to thank for the fact. Nessa K was the first wedding photographer that I followed who really put their personality online. Suddenly we had a voice as well as a vision. Add to that people like Nordica, who have dramatically changed the business side of being a wedding photographer.

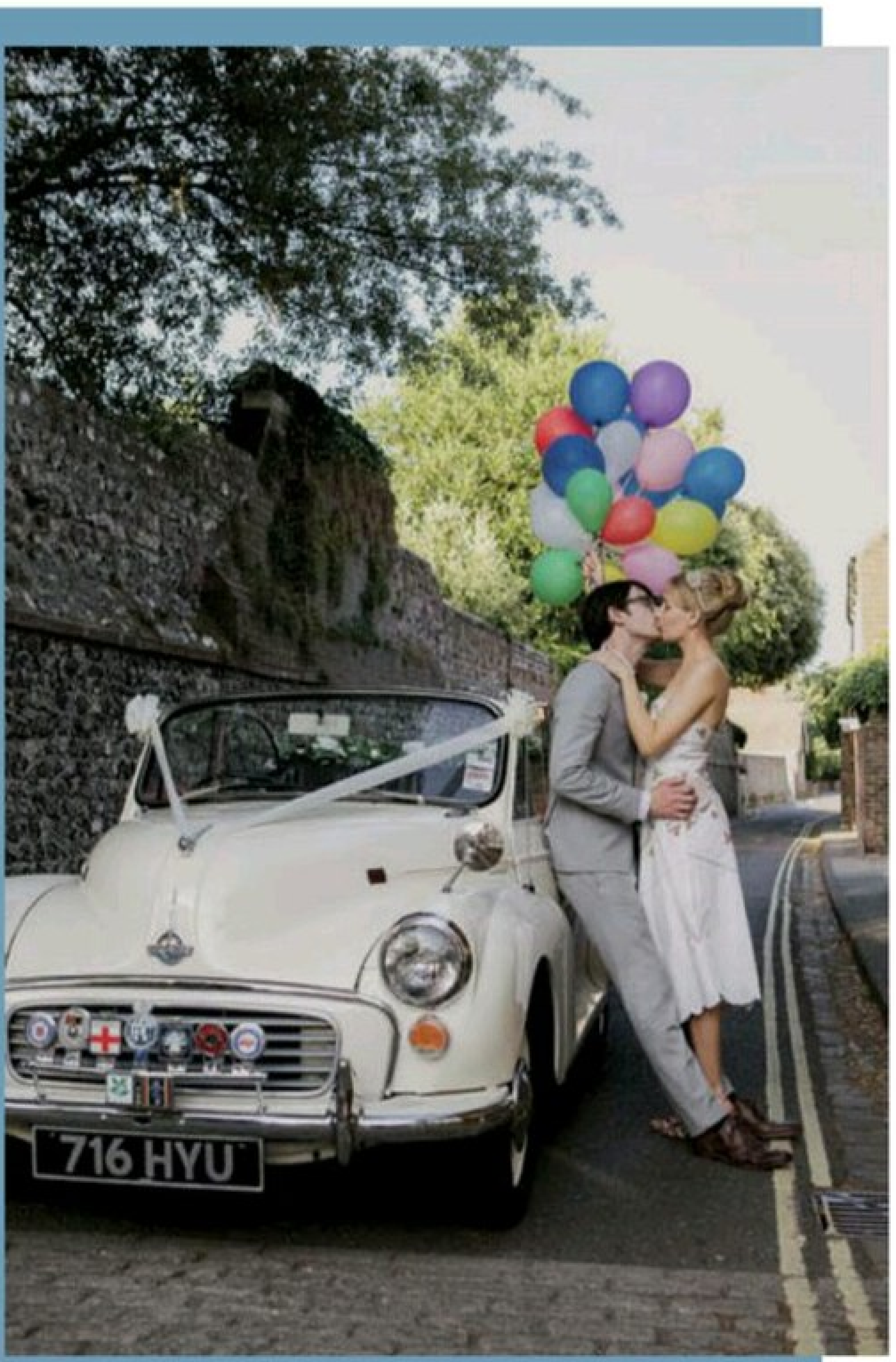
I recently spent some time with Ian Weldon - the I Am Not A Wedding Photographer guy -and think that we will see his influence next. I cannot end without acknowledging that Jonas Peterson must be the single biggest legend of modern wedding photography. We have much to be grateful to him and everyone on my list for. They've opened doors, paved ways and if you ever come across any of them, please buy them a drink and say thank you.

Lisa Devlin's List of Most Influential Wedding Photographers

(in alphabetical order)

- Samm Blake
- Cinzia Bruschini
- Emma Case
- Dan O'Day
- Sean Flannigan
- Ross Harvey
- Sam Hurd
- Fer Juaristi
- Nessa K
- The Kitcheners
- Two Mann Studios
- Gabe McClintock
- Elizabeth Messina
- Jeff Newsom
- Nordica
- We Are The Parsons
- Nirav Patel
- Jonas Peterson
- Jim Pollard
- Janneke Storm
- Jose Villa
- Ian Weldon

Lisa Devlin

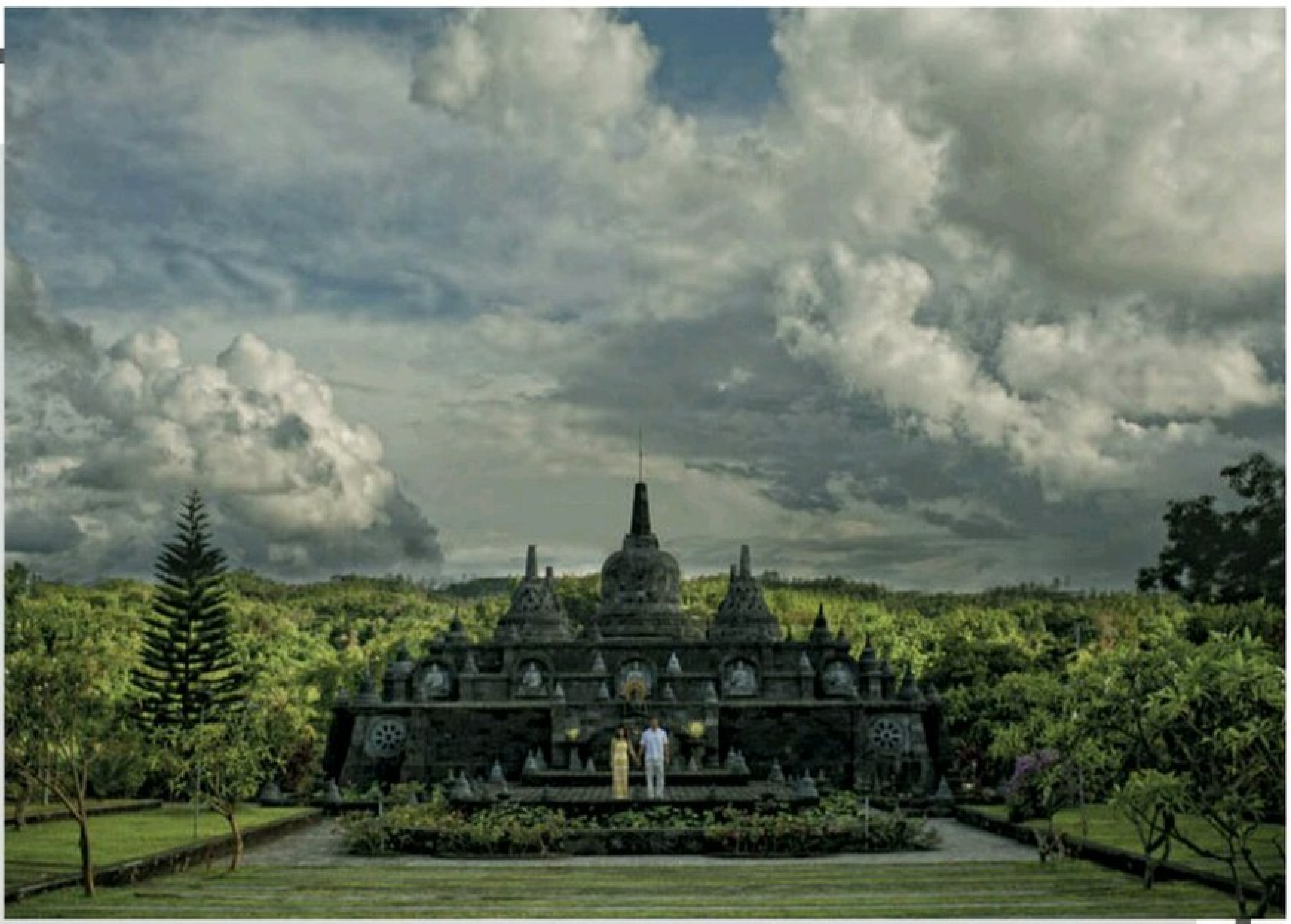


PICKING AN IMAGE for me is really easy. This is the one photo that completely changed everything for me back in 2010. I had coasted along really nicely for quite a while but I was starting to feel the pressure of lots of new photographers coming into the industry. I realised that I needed to seriously up my game and one thing that I decided to do was to try to win an award.

When you work solely for yourself the 'milestones' are not so obvious and definitely not celebrated by anyone other than you. So I think awards and accolades are a good thing to aim for, just to give yourself obvious goals and to make you feel like you're progressing. That same week I saw that the British Journal of Photography was running its first ever Wedding Photographer of The Year contest, so I entered with this photo.

I put a lot of thought into what might stand out to the judges and be in with a good chance. So first of all, I chose a portrait format as I knew that would fit on a magazine page better. I chose this wedding as I figured many of the other entries would be big white dresses in formal settings, whereas this one was very low key but cute. I didn't think I would win but I did think I could get on their radar. It was a big shock to find that my strategy worked and I was chosen. This opened so many incredible doors for me and, without it, I wouldn't have Photography Farm and all the opportunities that has brought for me. I haven't looked at the shot for a long time and really it's such a simple photo but it also came at the beginning of weddings becoming much more DIY and relaxed than they had been and I think it captured that mood really well.

/ **https://devlinphotos.co.uk/**



Jakob and Cole, Nordica Photography

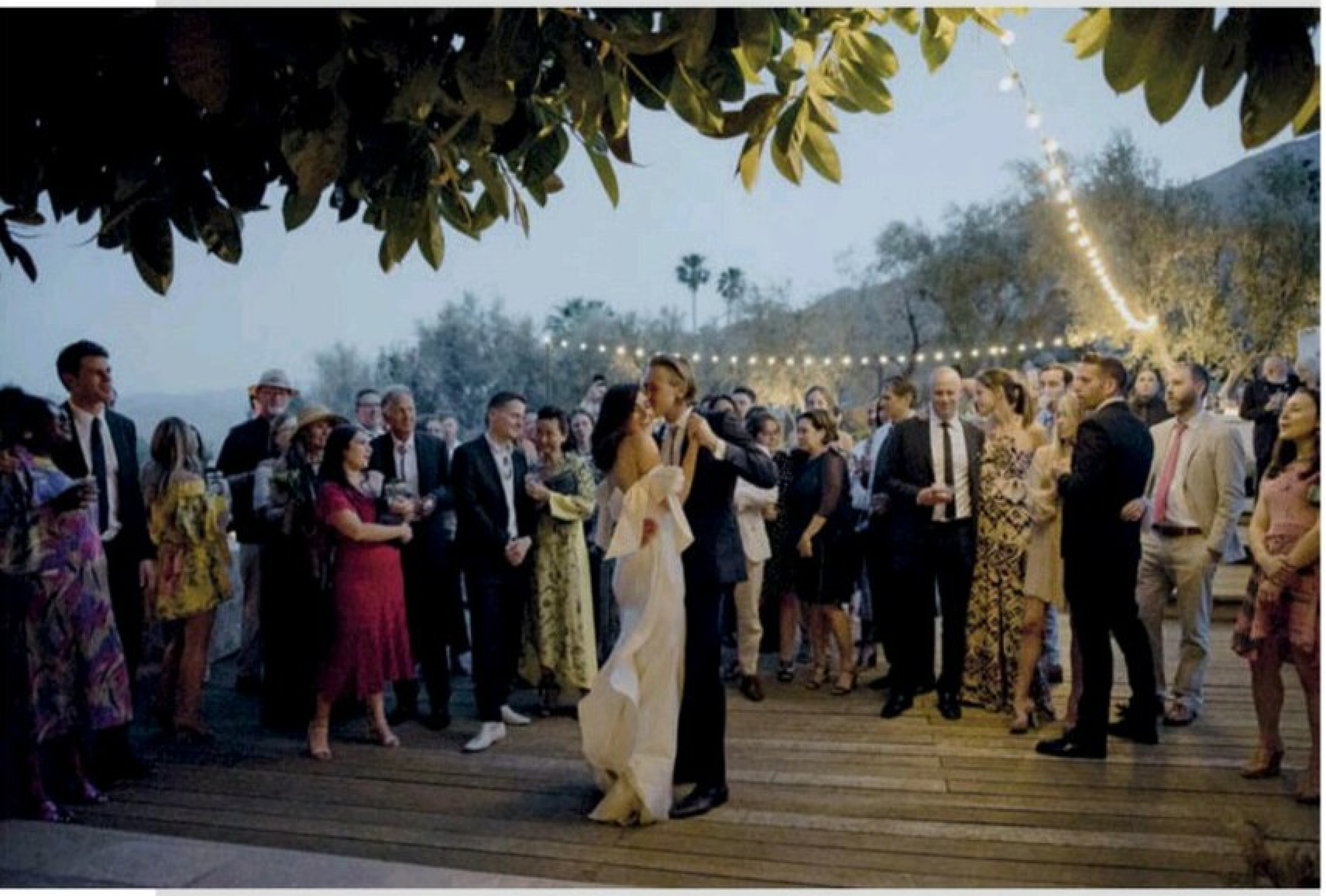
WE HAD TO THINK about this question for a bit and in the end settled on this image, which was taken in January 2013 of a Canadian couple who eloped in Bali with their family and friends. The location was Brahmavihara-Arama, a Buddhist Temple Monastery in the mountains near Lovina in North Bali. Up to that point we had done destination weddings in various places - Iceland, Mexico, Dominican Republic and so on - so we did have experience with travel. However, that exact moment at the temple was an entirely new level and we'll never forget the feeling of being there. It was insanely hot, the sights and smells were all very different and we'd travelled on a rickety bus the entire day to get there. Amidst the chaos of the day we suddenly found ourselves in a completely surreal location filled with calm atop a mountain. It was an empowering feeling, and filled us with the confidence we needed to challenge Nordica to reach new heights.

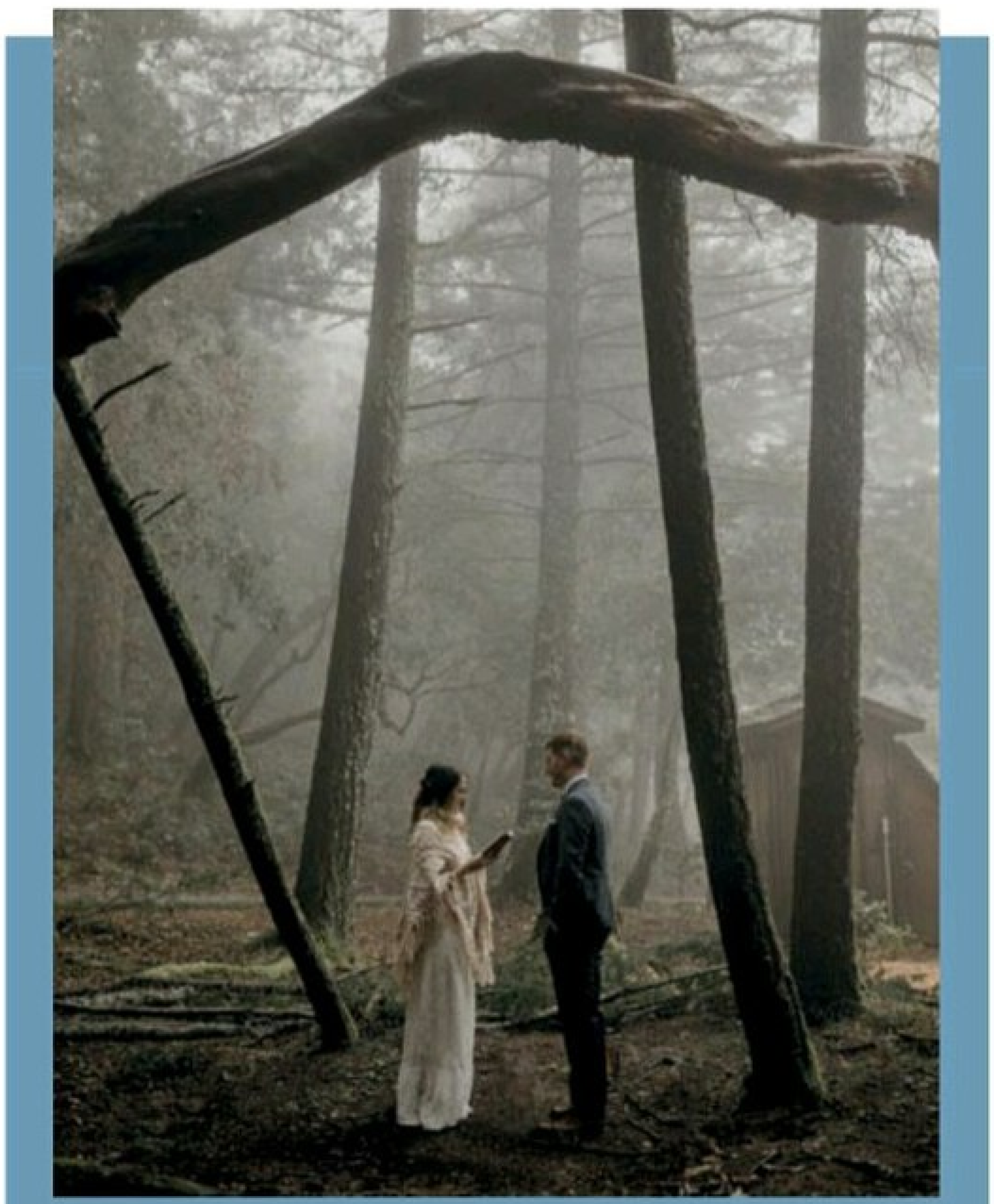
/ **https://nordicaphotography.com/**

Samm Blake

THIS SHOT, WHICH was taken in Palm Springs at the Frederick Loewe Estate, was a game changer for me because it made me realise that I should embrace the natural light more, particularly in tricky lighting conditions or at different times of day. I had set up a flash to get the first dance but, after a few initial shots, I realised it looked awful and didn't capture the ambience or the atmosphere of this location. It was twilight and beautiful, but the flash was killing all that. Quickly cranking my ISO up to 10,000 I was able to capture a far better shot of this couple's first dance. It taught me to push what we think our cameras are capable of and to not play it safe. The better photographs always happen when there is some risk involved.

/ **www.sammblake.com**

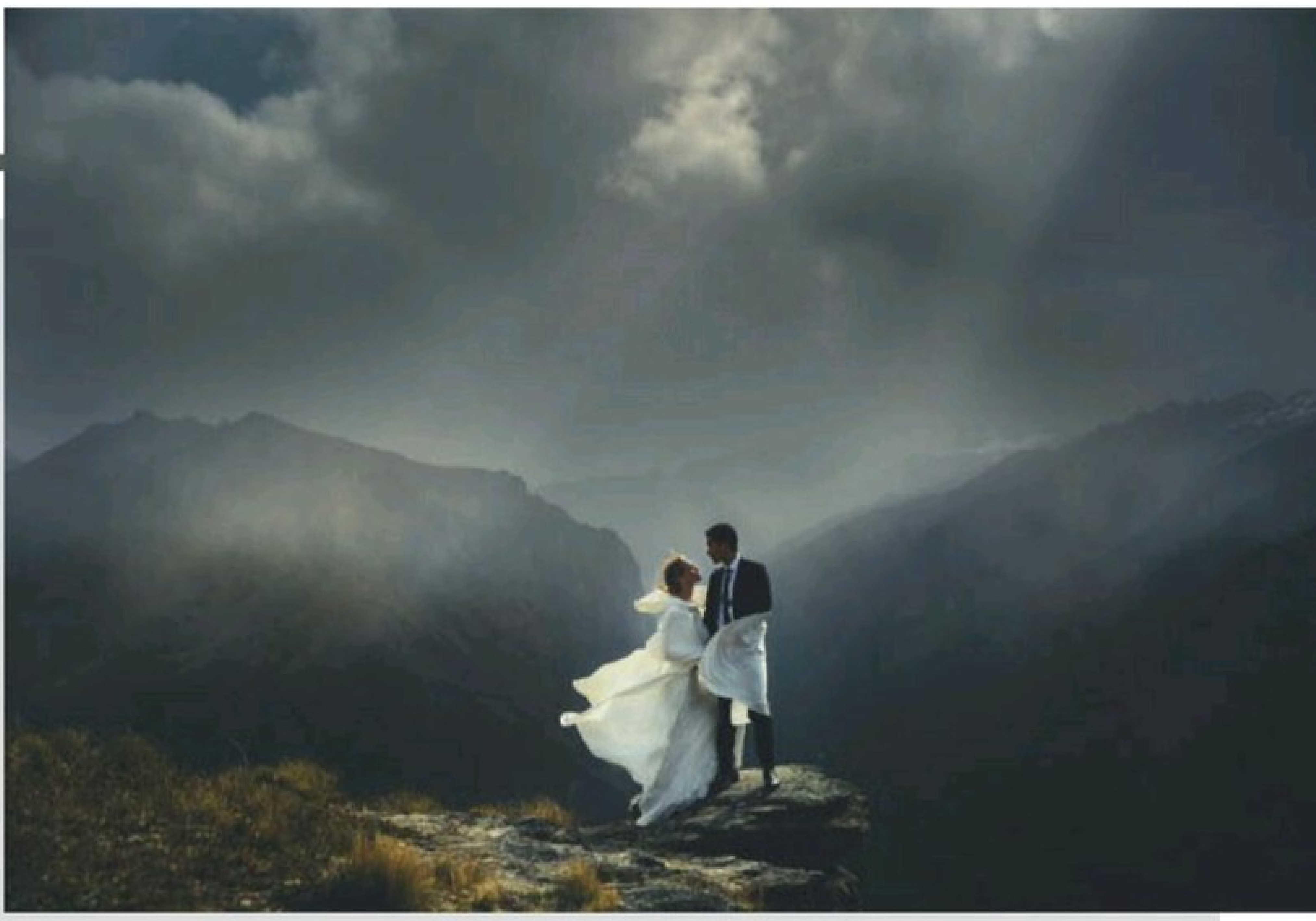




Nirav Patel

THIS IMAGE IS from an intimate elopement where I first felt my ability to tell a story was taken to another level. I learned how a client's complete trust in what I do could help me in creating something that completely aligns with the way I see the world and without any compromise. I always understood that it was important to find your unique voice in any creative industry and I felt like this story was the beginning of me getting closer to where I wanted to go with my body of work.

/ **www.niravpatel.com**



Jim and Vicky Pollard

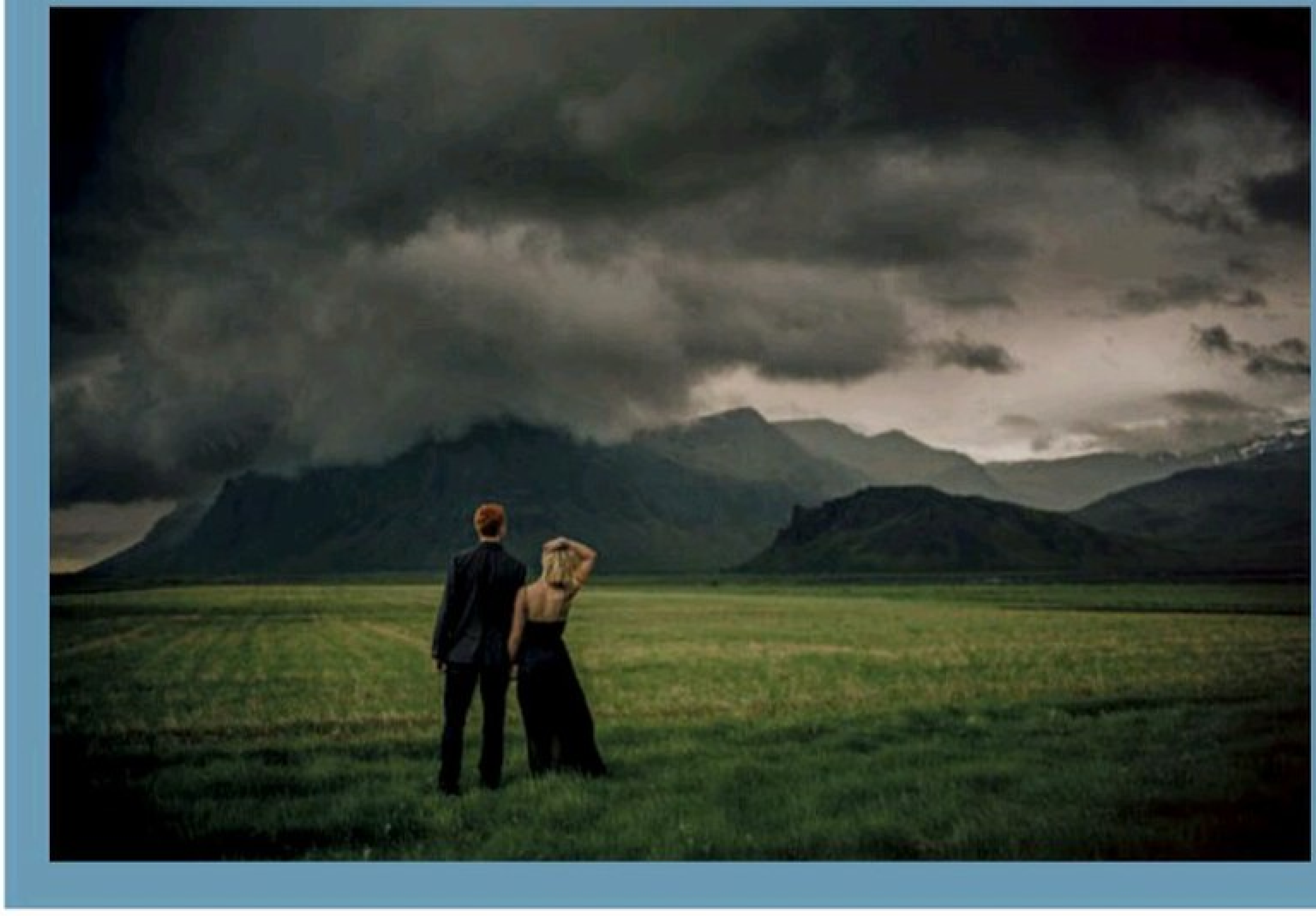
WHEN VICKY AND I first started out in wedding photography all we ever saw in magazines and online were happy smiling couples on sunny blue sky days, which of course was lovely. The trouble was that we lived and shot in the mountains and with that came mountain weather. We always wanted our photography to be honest, a true representation of both the couple and the environment that they chose to get married in. So if the clouds rolled in and the weather became a bit variable, we wanted to capture that. However, we also thought this was perhaps not the 'Dream Image' that every bride might desire on her wedding day.

This image of Emma and Keith from their wedding day here in New Zealand was probably the first image of ours to go viral and it was placed in the Top 50 Wedding Images in the world that year. Which is all very nice, but more importantly it showed that being true to ourselves and not following the crowd was okay. It gave us the confidence to continue to shoot how and where we loved, with the knowledge that there were couples who could buy into that too. I guess it also was the start of our style or voice - the 'Epic Moody Mountain Wedding Photographers.'

/ **www.pollardweare.com**

Gabe McClintock

THE ELOPEMENT OF Sara and Josh six years ago changed everything for me, personally as well as professionally. The back story is that this couple was supposed to get married at a family farm in Ohio and a few months before the day I received a Facebook message from Sara asking if 'we could talk?' Now usually messages like that, several months before a wedding, aren't a good thing, but boy this couldn't have been farther from the usual. It transpired that Sara and Josh were getting tired of the planning and stresses that can come along with a traditional wedding, so they had decided to forgo the traditional ceremony and elope to the place where they'd planned to have their honeymoon, namely Iceland. They asked if I wanted to come along and join them instead of going to Ohio and, of course, I replied with a 'YES!!'



Fast forward two months and I'm in a car driving down the highway with the couple in Iceland. I'm a little jet lagged but the adrenaline and excitement of seeing this incredibly gorgeous country for the first time pushes this away. We decide to stop the car off the side of the highway about 40 mins outside Reykjavík and as Sara and Josh do their final touches I begin to take it all in and it's at that point that I notice extremely dark storm clouds off in the distance and think, 'Holy cow...this is going to be good.' We walk, I start shooting and boy was I right. The next two days of capturing this couple's connection and elopement was nothing short of a completely magical experience.

A few weeks later I'm back home back in Canada and still on a high from this trip. I decided to edit and blog some images from this shoot as I'm excited to share the day. The blog goes live and the next morning Junebug weddings reaches out asking if they could feature the wedding. Subsequently the images end up on Reddit and a few other sites and within a few days I was contacted by PetaPixel, Huffington Post, Cosmopolitan Magazine and Yahoo for interviews. The Today Show out of NYC even flew a team to interview Sara and Josh in their home about the entire experience. The images and their story over the course of a few weeks were probably seen by 15+ million people.

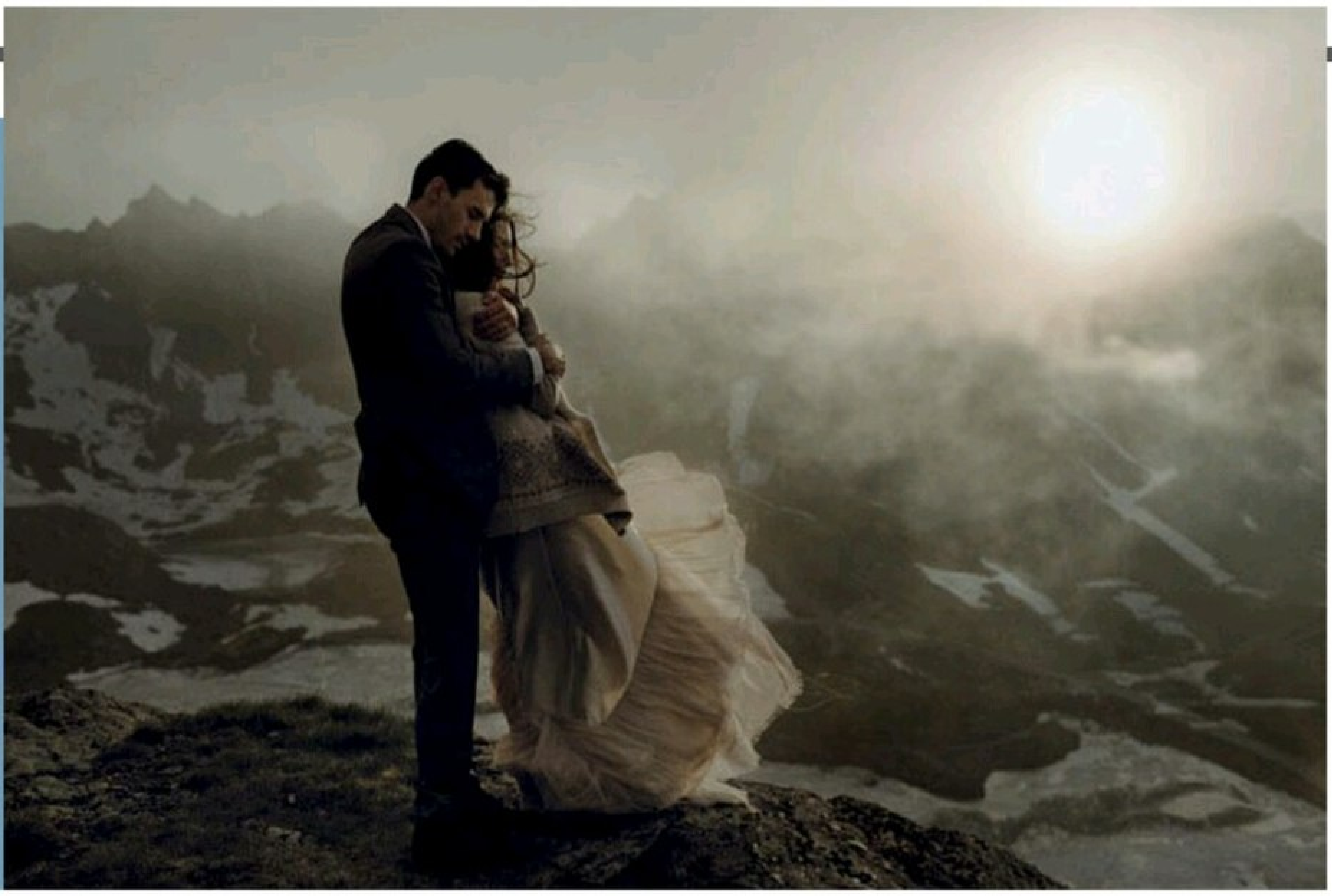
Since all of that happened I went from one or two destination weddings a year to 80-90% of my bookings now being destination and I've since had the opportunity to travel back to Iceland 14 times with so many other wonderful couples. It's been a crazy ride and it all started with this incredible couple.

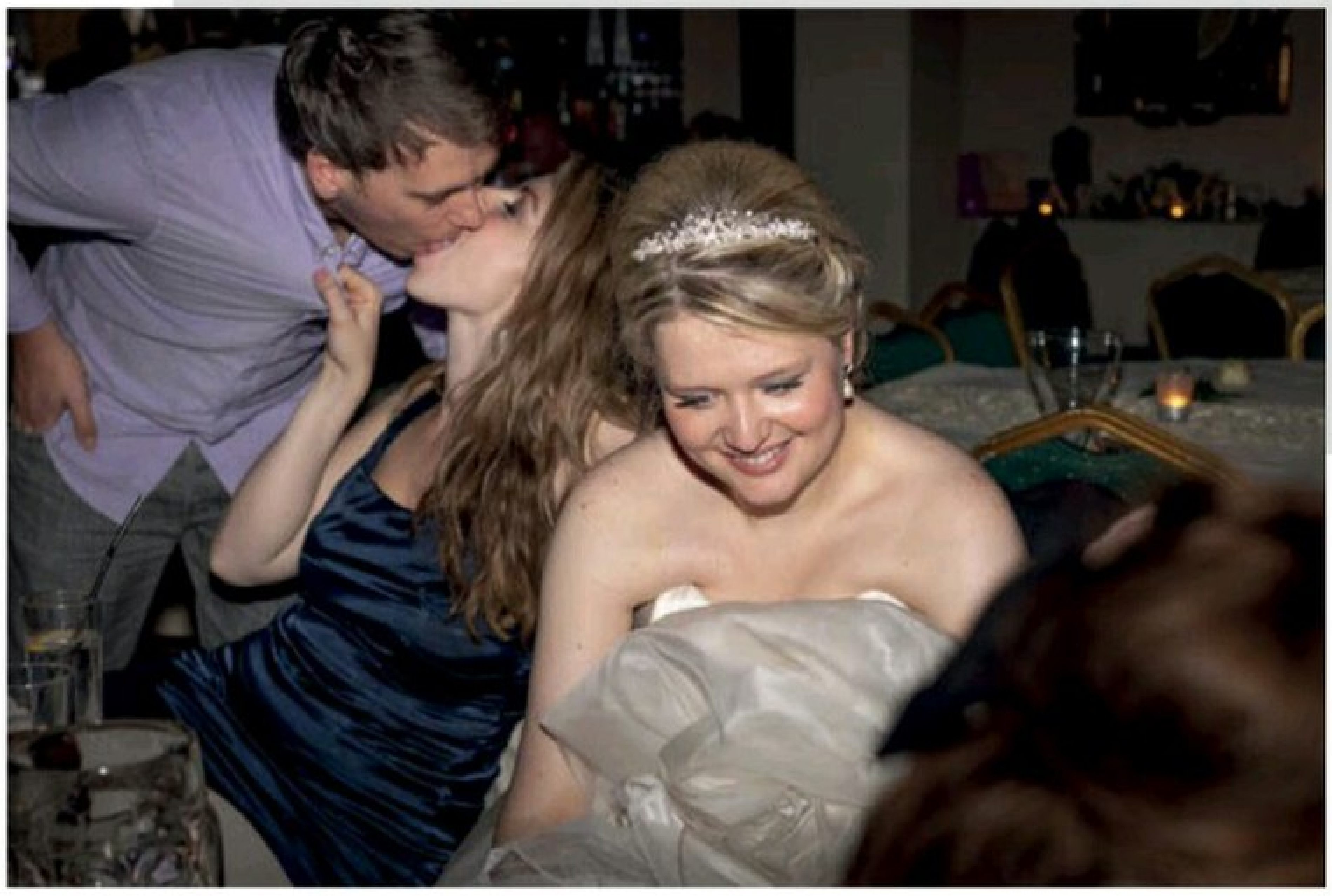
/ **www.gabemcclintock.com**

The Kitcheners

THIS WAS A MOMENT that we'll remember forever and we can still picture it vividly in our minds. We'd hiked up a mountain in Transylvania and reached the peak just as the sun was beginning to set behind the mountains. At that exact moment a cloud of fog rolled in and for ten very short minutes we experienced the most beautiful light we've ever photographed in. It's experiences like this one that remind us just how lucky we are to be documenting weddings for a living.

/ https://thekitcheners.co.uk/





Ian Weldon

I'D NOT CLAIM that any photograph I've taken could be seen as a 'game changer', but this, from one of the first weddings I photographed, stood out as something different. It made me realise that there was more to be explored at a wedding than the usual group shots, portraits, editorial style table settings and details.

/ http://ianweldon.com/

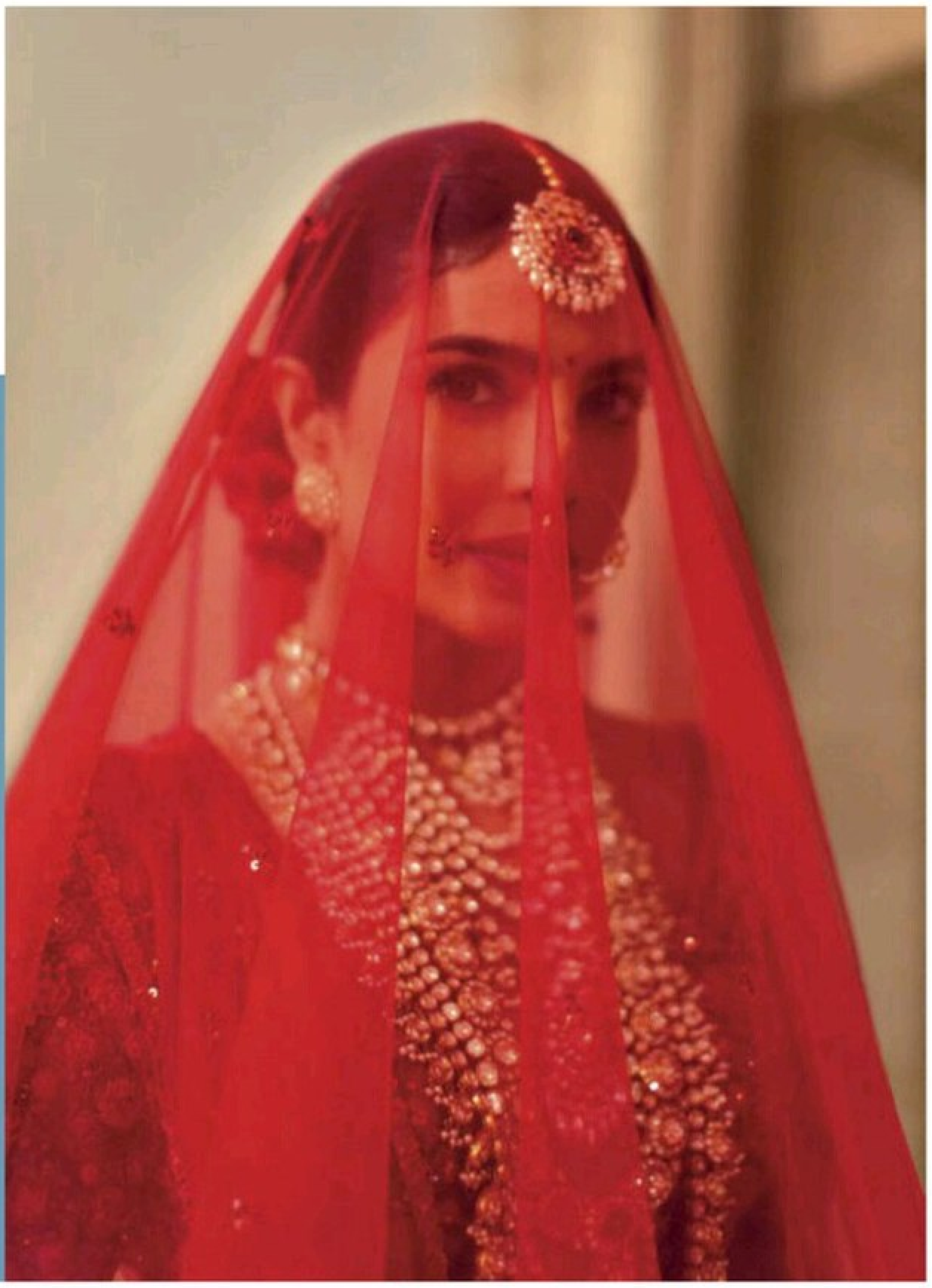
Jose Villa

I WAS COMMISSIONED to shoot Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas's wedding in December of last year, just a few weeks before the actual event in India. It turned out to be a whirlwind of a week, with five solid days of celebrations.

This Image of Priyanka was captured as she was walking down to the Indian ceremony on day five. Exhausted and mentally drained, the adrenaline of the week was still running on overdrive. We were running late and I knew that if I asked Priyanka to stop for a photo she might not want to give me the time of day and I was nervous to ask. But I finally got the guts to ask her to stop and look at me.

I managed to take three photos and then she walked away from my camera. One was out of focus, the other had a terrible crop as I fumbled to get the right angle and the last one was the winner. I looked at the back of my Canon 5D Mark IV and literally almost cried knowing I had gotten the shot I had envisaged. I will never forget that moment of anxiety. But it was so worth the wait and the asking.

/ https://josevilla.com/



Get ready for Weddings!

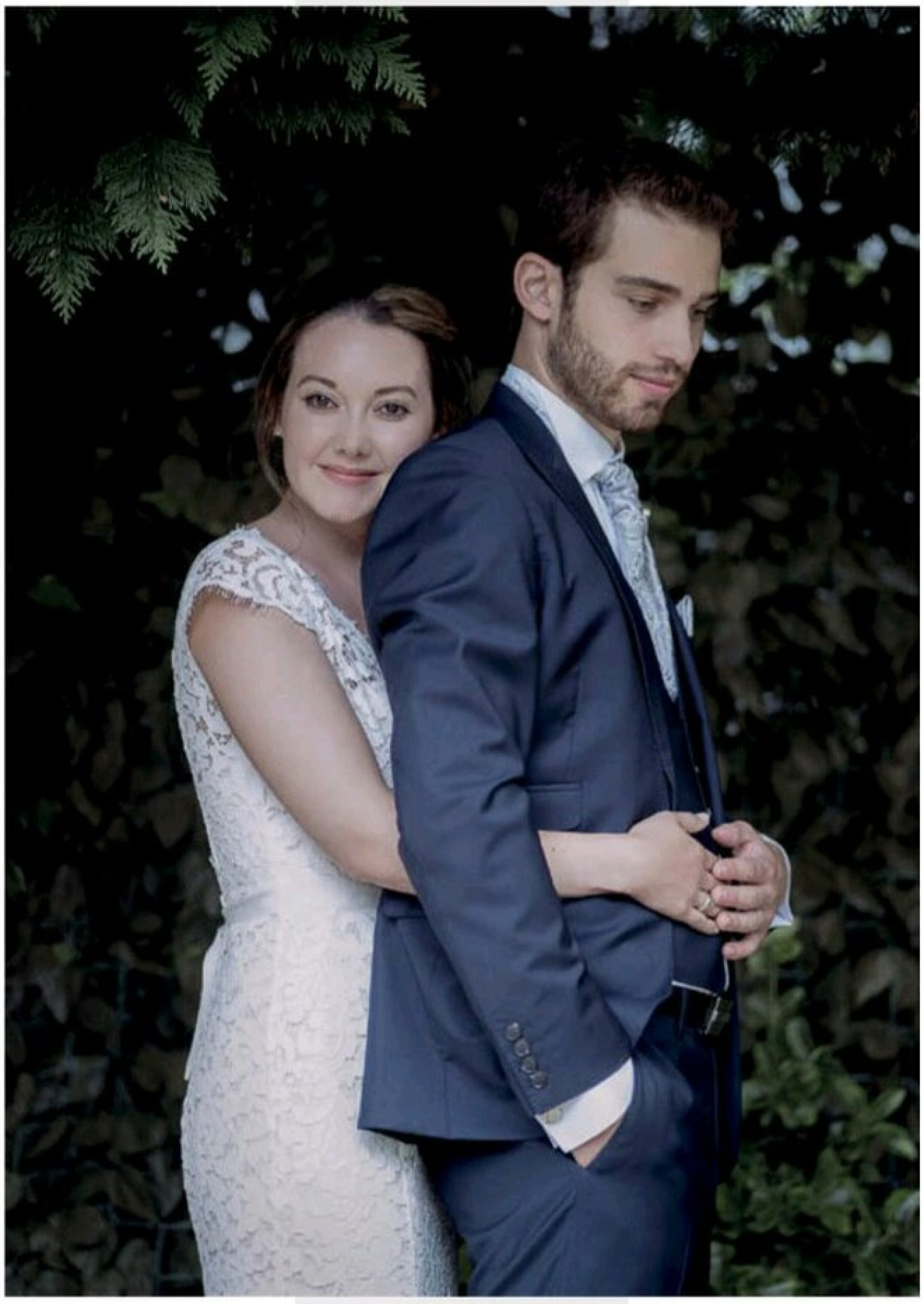
The wedding sector is one of the most vibrant of them all and if you're planning to get involved what kit do you need, can you source this second hand and how much might you need to pay?

THE DAYS WHEN you might have looked on wedding photography as a slightly cliched and repetitive business, full of traditional poses and wooden group shots, are thankfully long gone, and now the field is attracting young and inventive professionals who are relishing the chance to shake up the format and to push the boundaries. People like South Wales-based Zelda Rhiannon, for example, who is shooting weddings because she finds it exciting and fun and she loves being around a crowd that's enjoying getting together for a major celebration.

"Originally I was just taking pictures of my own kids and I never felt confident enough to imagine I could turn up at a wedding and be the official photographer," she recalls. "That changed when I was a ruuner-up in a competition and met photographer and trainer Kate Hopewell-Smith at The Photo Show and she convinced me that I had it in me to do this. After being mentored by her and signing up for her six-month foundation training programme I plucked up the courage to dive in and found out that I loved it! The rest is history really and I've never looked back."

That was four years ago and one of the first decisions Zelda had to make was what kit to take with her to cover off a typical wedding day. She started out with DSLRs in the form of two Nikon D750s, and this type of camera is still the traditional weapon of choice for many of those in the wedding photography business. The reason is simple: they are feature-packed, relatively small and portable compared to the cumbersome medium format models of yesteryear and, of course, you can fit a variety of lenses for ultimate flexibility.

Brand new prices for the more sophisticated models can be high – commonly over £2000 body only – which can act as a huge barrier to those looking to enter the business for the first time, especially if a back-up body is in the equation, which ideally it should be. However, by sourcing kit from a reputable second hand specialist such as MPB, which checks, grades and photographs every single item it sells and also adds a six month warranty for peace of mind, you can cut not just the cost of starting out but you can also eliminate the risk that might be associated with buying kit from an online auction site.



ABOVE: Zelda shoots her weddings these days using a pair of mirrorless Sony a7 IIIs, one fitted with a zoom and the other an 85mm prime portrait lens.

The brand new price for a Nikon D750 – recently usurped by the D780 - is currently £1299, while second hand prices on the MPB website at the time of going to press were around £799 for a model in excellent condition with a relatively low shutter count. If you were looking for a well-used version with more miles on the clock, perhaps to get you started or to use as that back-up we previously mentioned, it was possible to dive in for just £539, well under half the price of new and still with a guarantee.

In terms of lenses, Zelda was working with a 24-70mm and a 70-200mm, giving her the widest possible range of options at a wedding and she worked with one lens permanently attached to each body for ultimate speed of use. Lenses are one of the best value options to acquire second hand since they can give years of service if well looked after and yet you'll still save a considerable amount by not buying new. Just as with the camera bodies, all lenses are thoroughly checked out by MPB before being offered for sale, so everything will be fully functioning and there will be no danger of anything like mould growing on the internal optics, which can effectively be the end game for glass.

Of course there are alternatives to the Nikon D750 that are equally favoured by wedding photographers,

Sony a7 Mark III mirrorless at £1419.

Nikon D750 DSLR, just £799.

Olympus OM-D E-M1 II, costing £789

SOURCING SECOND HAND

Buying used kit is an excellent way to move into the wedding photography market or to upgrade the gear you have, and here are some great products that you could check out at some killer MPB prices!

CAMERAS

Sony a7 III (Excellent) £1419
Nikon D750 (Excellent) £799
Canon EOS 5D III (Excellent) £929

ALTERNATIVES

Olympus OM-D E-M1 II (Excellent) £789
Fujifilm X-T3 (Excellent) £854

LENSES

Sony FE 24-70mm f/2.8 GM (Excellent) £1449
Sony 70-200mm f/4 (Like New) £849
Sony FE 85mm f/1.8 (Like New) £464

ALTERNATIVES

Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM (Excellent) £634
Nikon AF-S 24-70mm f/2.8G IF-ED (Excellent) £634
Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8 L USM (Excellent) £669
Nikon AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8G IF-ED VR (Excellent) £689
Fujifilm XF 55-200mm f/3.5-4.8 R LM OIS (Excellent) £444
Canon EF 85mm f/1.8 USM (Excellent) £204
Sigma 85mm f/1.4 EX DG HSM, Nikon Fit (Excellent) £439
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 30mm f/3.5 Macro, (Like New), £154
Panasonic Lumix G Macro 30mm f/2.8 Asph. Mega OIS (Like New) £219

Check out the latest prices at www.mpb.com

Sony 24-70mm f/2.8 £1449

Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8 £634.

Sony 85mm f/1.8 £464.

one of the chief rivals being the full frame Canon EOS 5D Mark III. One in excellent condition was available on the MPB website at £929 as we went to press, with others in good condition fetching £844, so again a keenly priced piece of professional kit that would serve well in a wedding situation.

Moving to Mirrorless

After meeting and training with Kate, Zelda decided, after a huge amount of soul searching, to move on from her Nikon kit and over to Sony mirrorless models. Kate is a Sony ambassador and a great advocate for the brand and Zelda could see the advantage of moving to a lighter and even more compact model, and she very much appreciated the idea that 'what you see is what you get.'

"I invested in a pair of Sony a7 Mark IIIs," she says, "since I wanted to have a back-up with me and it meant that everything was in the same place on both bodies. I wear a Spyder holster, and this means that both cameras are close to hand, and one is fitted with a 24-70mm f/2.8 while the other is usually paired with an 85mm f/1.8 prime. The zoom covers me for a range of shots throughout the day, while the long lens is a beautiful portrait optic that I use all the time, with a lovely wide aperture that enables me to capture gorgeous bokeh in my shots.

"I also have a 70-200mm GM f/2.8 that's used for odd occasions on the day when I might shoot longer range images and a 30mm f/3.5 macro that I use right at the start of the day for close ups of such things as the wedding rings. I find this line up of optics covers off pretty much everything I need on the day and it's good not to have too much kit to be carrying around.

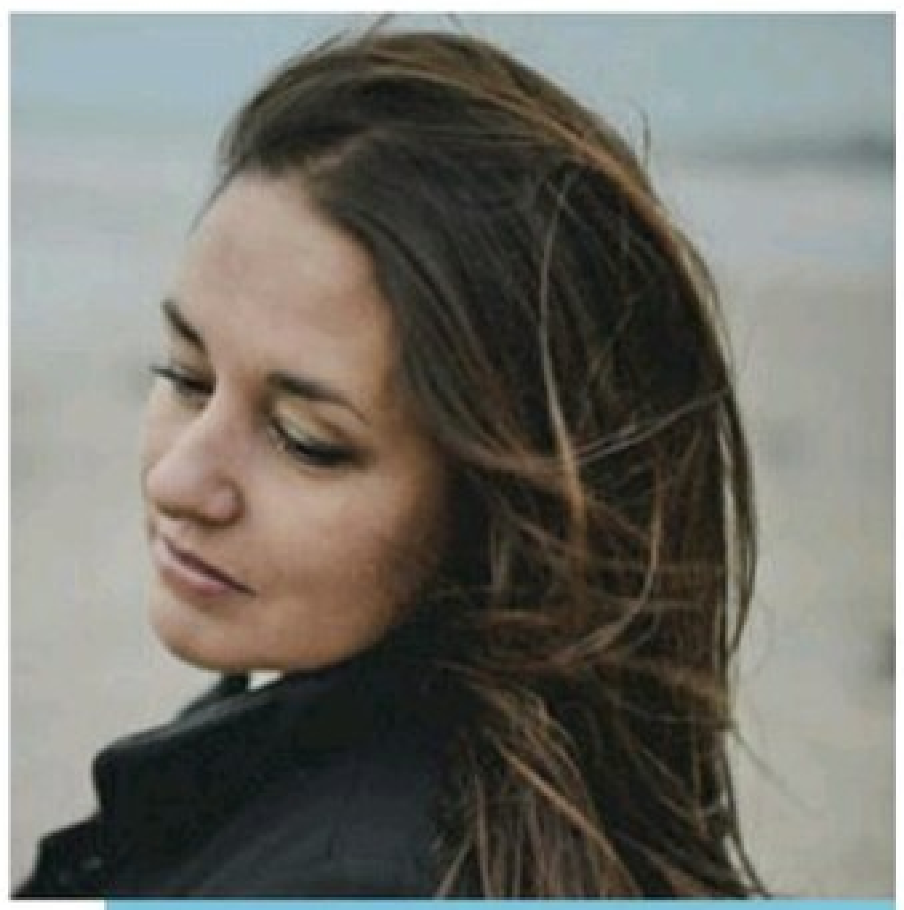
"Moving over from a DSLR to a mirrorless model was quite a big step for me because I was changing system at the same time and had to get used to the obvious differences, but I soon got used to things. I love the way I can see exactly what I'm getting on the LCD screen, down to changes in the density of the image if I change my aperture, and it's just such an intuitive way to work. I would, however, say that I adored my Nikon kit, so a DSLR would still be an excellent option for someone just starting out."

The good news is that second hand specialists such as MPB offer the full range of products, including many models that are still current and very much cutting edge, and there's a good assortment of mirrorless choices sitting there waiting for a new owner, including the same a7 Mark III model that Zelda uses for a very reasonable £1419, as opposed to a brand new price of £1678. Once again the six month guarantee comes as standard and you can rest assured that you'll be acquiring a quality used piece of kit that's in great condition and won't let you down.

Zelda herself has been an MPB customer in the past and wouldn't hesitate to use the company for times when she's looking to trade up or swap in under-used kit. "It's a great outlet," she says, "and it's brilliant to have a facility such as this for moving on and acquiring pro-spec equipment." ■

Zelda Rhiannon

More Information:
/ www.zeldarhiannon.co.uk



Melissa Love

Self Employed Business Survival

This is a time of huge uncertainty for anyone running a small business, which probably covers most photographers. Here's some thoughts from Melissa about how to cope.

IN THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE it's to be expected that we're all wondering at the moment what's going to be happening to our self-employed businesses. I've put together a four point action plan that you can dive into today to make sure you are futureproofing your business as much as possible at this crucial time. Not only do I want you to survive, I want you to thrive.

Retaining Existing Income

Your existing booked clients will be looking for your leadership and your creative solutions right now, so this is the most pressing thing you need to do. I've seen some people saying 'I don't want to contact my clients because I don't want to give them ideas.' The truth is that they will already be thinking of cancelling. It's much better to communicate now, rather than later, so that you seem like the proactive one and you remain in charge of the narrative.

It's important to acknowledge that the situation is difficult for all parties, but it's equally important to emphasise that this won't last forever. If you're a photographer people are still going to get married and they are, eventually, going to be thinking about portrait and commercial shoots. These things will happen - not right now - but down the line. Refrain from speculating. Don't say 'We don't know what's going to happen, but if this, and if that...'

Instead, be really clear about different options open to them and outline the most likely key scenarios according to the expected timeline of events for your location. Click through to my Business Survival Resource Link at the end of this feature to see a template for a letter you can send out, kindly shared by photographer, Rowan Williams.

These are the scenarios I recommend covering.

1. If you're not well, what is your backup plan?
2. If you're not well and can't deliver on your contract.
3. If your client decides to postpone the event or booking
4. If the event or booking is postponed due to quarantine.

Payment Schedules

When you're communicating with your clients and it's not possible to agree an exact timeline, don't be afraid to share that cashflow is really vital for small businesses, especially in this current climate.

You can highlight that it's an opportunity for them to pay for an event or a contract over a period of time. They might appreciate the option to slowly pay off their wedding photography, for example, and some people may be in professions which aren't going to be affected quite so much.

A good negotiation ends in compromise and great compromise is achieved when both people can live with the outcome even if it's not ideal. Understand that these conversations might be difficult.

- Consider at the outset asking for the balance to be paid when it was originally due.
- If that's not possible in the circumstances you can ask for a lesser amount to be paid on the original due date and then spread the balance out over a greater number of payments.
- Highlight that paying you now will lock in rates that might otherwise go up next year.

Alternative Arrangements

If you offer services that are non-contact or could involve shooting from a distance, you may have the opportunity to build relationships. For couples who need to move their wedding date, consider proposing a non-contact couple's shoot to create beautiful images to mark their original wedding date. Anything you can do to build relationships with them now is going to appear proactive and will help to earn their loyalty. I've also seen some enterprising videography companies offering free live streaming of weddings that are still taking place.

If you have commercial work booked that involved a large lump-sum payment, consider offering to convert any big one-time payments into a

PHOTO BY HANNAH OLINGER ON UNSPLASH

ABOVE: Make plans for ways that you can tweak your business to retain customers and to help them spread payments.

"It's important to acknowledge that the situation is difficult for all parties, but it's equally important to emphasise that this won't last forever."

monthly subscription over a longer period to ensure that you keep some cash coming in and continue to maintain the relationship

You may also have scenarios where clients still want work completing but for less money. Don't rush to discount but instead propose that projects are scaled down rather than cancelled.

Think about buddying up. This is probably the most important thing to do to safeguard your business. I would highly recommend teaming up with someone who is in the same industry as you and can easily understand what you do. I'd really urge you to go above and beyond your usual emergency cover arrangements here. If you're a photographer reach out to one or two people near you and discuss how you can keep operating each other's businesses if you aren't able to operate it yourself.

Consider training each other on your essential workflows.

- How and where do you store memory cards?
- Document storage systems and passwords in case they might have the need to retrieve photos from your computer to send to a client.

Reorganising your cashflow

- Start with identifying your largest business expenses and check for offers - mobile phone and utility companies are being very helpful.
- Check for any government financial aid packages. For example, business premises rates have been abolished in the UK for the next year and the government is announcing additional financial support on a daily basis.
- You can defer business taxes like VAT and Corporation Tax with Time To Pay.
- Check with your local council because it's going to vary depending on where you live, but consider suspending any automatic payments of government related expenses like council tax.
- If you're in the UK you can check eligibility for Universal Credit and Jobseeker's Allowance. You also do not have to be seeking other employment. You just have to prove that you are trying to safeguard your business.
- Mortgage companies are offering payment holidays and are happy to spread it over the rest of the term.
- Banks are offering loans and overdrafts.

PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT ON UNSPLASH

ABOVE: Working from home is the new norm but try to think of new and innovative ways to stay in touch with your clients, such as video conferencing.

NEXT MONTH:
Melissa ponders on what your ideal client really thinks about you and shows how to use research tools to discover the problems and desires your clients have when they're deciding whether to choose you.

Replacing income

It's tempting to diversify immediately and jump into offering new services. Before you do, be mindful of someone's first experience of what you have to offer being a poor imitation of your usual service and don't devalue what you do by slashing your rates. Instead focus on remaining visible. People are going to be online much more than usual, so it's important to keep marketing your business and to stay at the top of people's minds.

If you think you can offer additional services, consider the following:

- You might try to generate sales from some past clients by approaching people who didn't buy image files or albums the first time around.
- Sell vouchers for a photo shoot at a later date.
- Offer free portfolio-building shoots if you can safely do so. It's a great way to build relationships which could be fruitful at some point in the future.
- Now's the time to create some stock photography for sites like Getty Images
- If you don't want to offer new services consider applying for jobs which are related to essential services, like food stores and NHS phone lines

Reach out and refresh

This is a great time, if cash is tight, to skill-swap with someone. For example, you might be able to swap your photography services with a web designer out there or maybe an SEO expert.

Obviously this is also a great time to dive into online learning and companies are putting out all sorts of offers at the moment. This could be a great opportunity to scale up to offer a new service to clients. Maybe it's the time for you to master videography or to refresh your website. It's also a great time to do your accounts because the more informed you are about what you owe the better.

And of course, if you've been putting off making a marketing plan, I'm making The Marketing Fix completely free this month for all Professional Photo readers. You can access the membership using this special code: freemonthfix. ■

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© VERUSHKA BAUDO

Julia Boggio

Outrunning the Zombies

Eyes are a crucial asset for any photographer, but after years of putting up with inconvenient contact lenses and glasses Julia has made the decision to get lasered.

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS that keep me up at night: thinking about the ever-present political shenanigans. Contemplating the rushed final season of *Game of Thrones*. Pondering how much we have screwed up this earth for our children.

One of things I also worry about is the Zombie Apocalypse. If humanity were faced with an invasion of the undead, I would be that person in the movie that gets eaten first. Why? Because I am blind as a bat without my contact lenses. Chances are strong that I would not be near my supply of lenses when the zombies turned up and, even if I did have them, they'd eventually run out and, if the zombies didn't get me, an eye infection brought on by overuse of the contacts without access to antibiotics would. Even if I somehow managed to have my glasses on me, they are quite loose and would most likely fall off while I ran away. If you are having trouble following the logic above, then you probably have perfect vision.

Laser Surgery

For over twenty years, I have considered getting laser eye surgery. It never seemed to be the right time – especially after I made the move to full-time photographer in 2005. The thing that's been stopping me is the fact that my eyes are pretty important to what I do for a living. The fear of messing them up in some way has kept the lasers firmly away. But it's 2020 this year. When would be a more perfect time to go 20/20?

With this in mind, I made an appointment at Moorfield Eye Hospital in Old Street. My optician had advised me to go there for my initial consult and, once they confirmed I was a good candidate, go somewhere on Harley Street for the actual operation, as it's half the cost. The idea being that Moorfield would be honest with me, while other places might just want my money.

So I made my appointment. For one week before the appointment I needed to wear my glasses only, so my corneas could return to their natural shape. This in itself required some careful planning. Every time I see my optician she yells at me for wearing my contacts too long – from when I get up to when I go to bed, about twice the recommended length of time – so I'm dependent on them. Also my glasses are over ten years old and they always slide down my nose.

> "I had to choose my appointment carefully and I went with a week after SWPP and before WPPI. Most of my daily activities could be performed while wearing glasses."

I had to choose my appointment carefully and I went with a week after SWPP and before WPPI. Most of my daily activities could be performed while wearing glasses. The only slight issue is that I am training for a half marathon and running with glasses can be a sweaty, slippery mess. Thank heavens for rubber bands.

The appointment itself was painless. They rechecked my prescription and took lots of pictures of my eyes to make sure they were healthy. Thankfully, I'm a good candidate, despite having thin corneas (Thin corneas? Why on earth didn't my thighs get this particular message?).

They've recommended having one eye lasered for distance – my dominant right eye which I use for the viewfinder – and then the other eye can be lasered for reading. This would mean that my right eye would actually be significantly stronger than my left, but our very clever brains step in to even things out, so that we don't consciously notice the difference in everyday life.

I'm definitely going to go ahead with it in the next few months. It's a quick operation – ten minutes for each eye – with an improvement in vision right away. The thought of waking up in the morning and being able to see right away, instead of batting my nightstand like I'm playing Whack-A-Mole as I try to locate my glasses fills me with joy. And as for the zombies, if they could just hold off with their invasion until sometime after May, that would be great. I'll be ready for them then. ■

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Sim Imaging album with images by Becky Harley

The Power of Presentation

There are many good reasons why it doesn't make sense for wedding photographers to offer nothing but digital files, especially when there are so many great presentation options out there.

WORDS TERRY HOPE

IF YOU'RE A WEDDING photographer running around like a headless chicken much of the time, desperately trying to stay on top of a busy business then it's perhaps easy to see why presentation doesn't come high up on your list of things to think about. However, if you shut your eyes to the opportunities out there and go for the easy option of simply handing over your digital files and moving on to the next job then you're potentially slamming the door on not just a brilliant profit opportunity but a way to show the world just how great your pictures can look when they've been showcased in a beautifully presented album.

"The problem is that when you hand over your digital files to your customer they might well go and get them printed up at the cheapest outlet they can find," comments Derek Poulston, sales and marketing manager at top pro lab One Vision Imaging. "They could then just stick them in an album without any real thought and show them around their friends and family, and that's how your work will be represented. Compare that to an album that been carefully colour managed and exquisitely printed and put together that will act as a potential sales tool for your services whenever anyone looks at it."

One Vision decided to tackle the issue head on by producing the Britannia Album, which it markets to its clients from the killer price point of £78.20 for a 20-page 12x10in product, rising to £99 for a full size 40-page album. It was intended at the outset to be the definitive response to budget albums available from overseas sources, but while it's low cost there's nothing cut price about this product. It's made with the same high quality photographic paper and soft touch leatherette as the company's premium albums and you can even add laser engraving and a personalised ribbon to the package for a small extra cost.

SIMON & ASHLEIGH
YOUR Handmade ALBUM

Britannia Album by One Vision Imaging

Brand new from One Vision is another presentation product that can add a highly professional touch, Quality Assurance Plaques that can be attached to an album or print to add reassurance. Using your company logo, plaques are printed in monochrome on to pre-coated brushed silver, aluminium plaques that are 95mm square. On the back are two strips of very strong double sided tape, and you simply peel and stick these to your product. The cost is £60 plus VAT for a pack of twelve and they are available now.

The Sim Group is another lab that places great value on its handmade album and photo book offerings, with its Professional Layflat options proving particularly popular. These enable striking double page, edge to edge printing and they come with an extensive range of covers and are available in five different sizes and paper types and in landscape, portrait and square orientation. Professional Wedding Books are another popular option and for those that are supplying digital files, either instead or alongside a printed product, there are bespoke USB stick and />

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> "The latest announcement from Loxley is a series of upgrades to the company's hugely popular line up of Bellissimo Albums, which only recently saw the introduction of white end sheets, double and triple thick pages and white core easy sheets."

presentation boxes to ensure a professional finish here as well.

The company is also making its framing range available to order on Sim Imaging to enable customers to have a one-stop shop for placing orders. A 'floating' mount has also been introduced to enable photographers to choose a style that fits with their brand, the illusion being that the image is apparently floating within the frame, and this will be available on single images as well as multi image designs.

One of those to work closely with Sim is photographer Becky Harley, who is local to the lab and has built up a close personal relationship with them over the years, to the benefit of both parties. "What I particularly like is the fact that the company is close enough for me to pop in on a fairly regular basis," she says. "This gives me the opportunity to visit their showroom and to see first-hand the albums on display there and to make a more informed decision about which ones might suit my business best. I'm also very environmentally conscious so I like the idea of being able to collect my albums in person rather than them being shipped over to me from the other side of the world."

RUSTY
RUSTY
Bellissimo Album by Loxley Colour

Becky appreciates that not every one of her clients wants to order an album or book and she doesn't try to persuade anyone to purchase anything they might not be convinced that they need. "I'm not into making a hard sell," she says, "but I do explain the value of an album and I include options with the packages I offer. One thing I did decide was to select just a couple of core products that I really liked and to then focus on these. With Sim you can have pretty much anything you want and the variety of choice is amazing. However, too much choice can be confusing for a client and so I hone it down to make it nice and simple."

Fountains Album by Digital Lab

Huge Range of Choice

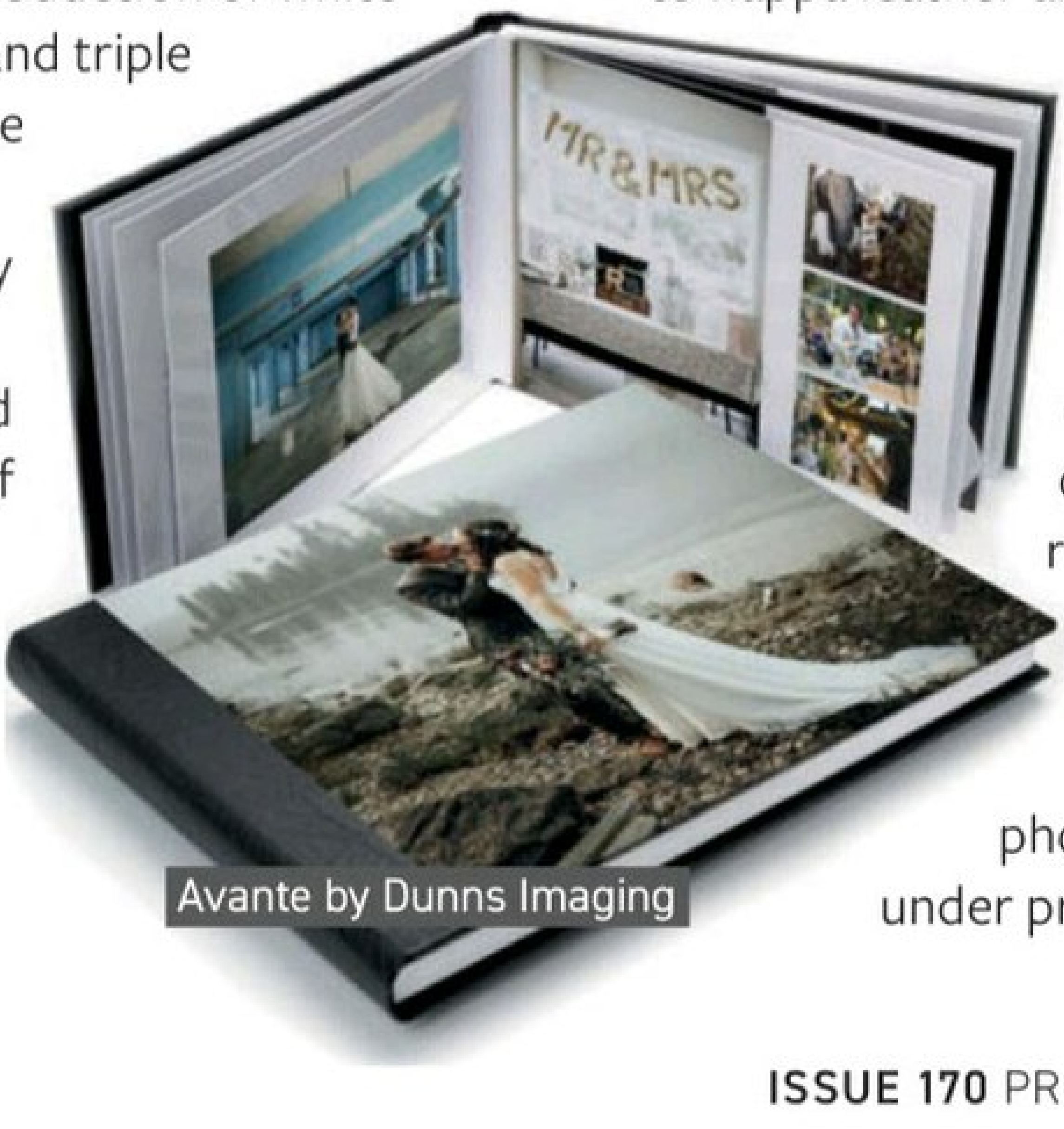
The point about forging a close relationship with your chosen pro lab partner is a crucial one, and often this enables a really special service as your provider gets to know you and your requirements more closely. At Loxley Colour, for example, this extends to an individual photographer dealing with the same person each time, while there is an open invitation to visit the premises to see first-hand the vast range of products that are on offer and to tour the facility to experience the personal service.

Loxley Colour's latest announcement is a series of upgrades to its hugely popular line up of Bellissimo Albums, which only recently saw the introduction of white end sheets, double and triple thick pages and white core easy sheets. Now you additionally have the choice of padded or unpadded covers, a selection of new cover materials and a stylish new album box, with an optional personalised front cover, a subtle linen padded interior and a coordinated ribbon. It's also possible to add a matching USB stick to the overall package.

Another company with a new product to shout about is Digital Lab, which has announced its new Fountain Albums range, launched to fill what it sees as a gap in the market for high quality hand finished albums at a competitive price. The line-up is offered in the most popular six sizes, from 8x8in through to 16x12in, including 10x10in and 12x12in square formats, and cover choices include a range of vintage distressed leather options, alongside vegan leather, linen and hessian cover options as well as an image panel cover.

Meanwhile the albums themselves will come in a classic draw string bag that's placed in a kraft box which can be personalised, and there will be an option for an upgrade to wooden boxes that come with and without USB options.

Dunns Imaging's range of products includes Avante Luxury Albums, which feature premium quality, double mounted pages with a choice of cover options ranging from high quality linens through to nappa leather and a popular range of Love Wedding Albums starting from £79.99, that feature precision printed weighted pages, a choice of ten different cover fabrics and a ribbon presentation box. Dunns also offers an album design service for those busy photographers that are under pressure. On approval />



Avante by Dunns Imaging

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the album will be printed and despatched within seven working days.

Another company that offers a wide range, this time exclusively photobooks, is CEWE, its best seller being its Large Landscape Photo Book, which is 28x21cms in size and can be up to 178 pages with prices starting from £28.99. Meanwhile its Square Photo Book at 21x21cms is also highly popular, and can hold up to 98 pages with prices starting at £24.99.

The new wall art range from nPhoto

Sticking with Tradition

The traditional style of album has enjoyed a rise in popularity in recent times judging by the experience of Heritage Photo Albums, which has experienced a 45% increase in turnover in the past three years. As a company that can trace its history right back to the period just after the Second World War, generations of families will have experienced its products, and, as is the case with most specialists, trade prices are restricted to professionals so there's a sense of exclusivity associated with the brand. There's also a great story to tell to customers about the bespoke nature of the products, since they still originate in the original hand operated bindery in the West Country where they've now been made for over 25 years.

Album by CEWE

ROSS + FIONA
ROSS + FIONA

"They are beautiful products and very popular with my clients," says Wimbledon-based wedding specialist Dave Vickers. "People love a classic product and they're offered as a choice with my packages. They can take a while to put together but they look beautiful and carry a decent margin as well so they can add to the profit you make on a wedding. And there's nothing like handing over an album to a couple since it really is a bit of theatre and something you wouldn't get by handing over a box of prints."

Heritage Photo Albums

While looking every inch an upmarket product, Heritage Albums are surprisingly affordable, especially once trade prices are taken into account. For example, a traditional 12x12in wedding album with 40 card weight pages complete with glassine interleaves, embossed with 'Our Wedding' on the cover and with a gift box is available from £39.95 plus VAT with no minimum order and a potential sale price to the client would usually be around £150.

It's not just about albums, of course, and another presentational item that's also hugely popular is wall decor, and nPhoto has recently introduced a range of seven well-priced new products that should be on the radar of all social photographers. The line-up ranges from Acrylic prints through to Dibond Metal prints in a choice of standard, stacked or framed finishes, Classic framed prints and MDF Wall Mounted prints. Check them out on the nPhoto website. PP

More information:
/ www.onevisionimaging.com
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/ www.digitallab.co.uk
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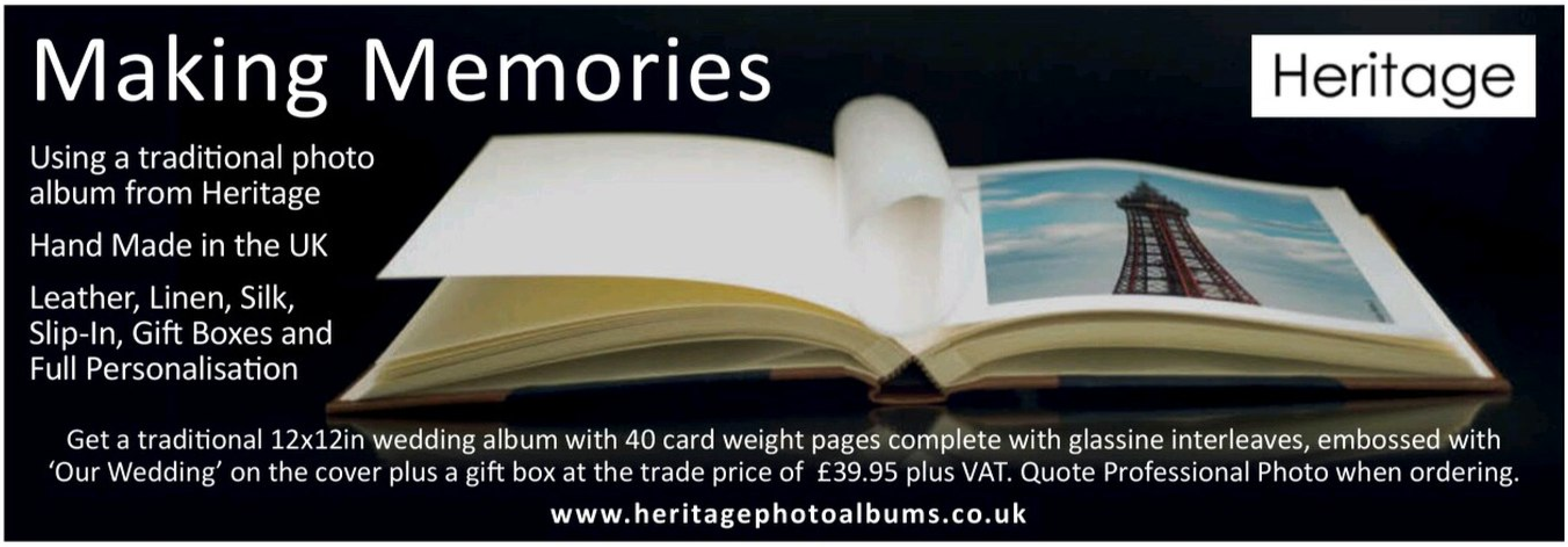

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www.heritagephotoalbums.co.uk

RIGHT Aston Martin dream machine, photographed by Richard at the Cowdray Park Estate in Midhurst.

TESTED

WORDS AND PICTURES RICHARD BRADBURY

The Hasselblad X1D II 50C

Self-confessed Hasselblad aficionado Richard Bradbury takes the latest X1D II along on an upmarket car shoot to see whether its upgrades and new price point can make this model a winner.

I SPENT A WONDERFUL evening at The Printhouse the other week viewing the opening night of 'Showcase by Hasselblad'. It included some of the most iconic images of the past 50 years in photography. With work from Gered Mankowitz, Clive Arrowsmith and Tim Flach amongst others there is little to doubt the heritage of a camera maker that can forever claim to have produced the first camera to go to the moon.

Quite simply you cannot be a professional photographer without having a special place in your heart for a Hasselblad. I have owned and worked with many 'Blads' over the years, both film and digital models, and I honestly cannot think of one that I didn't fall hopelessly in love with.

With this in mind I was surprised when Hasselblad launched the X1D back in 2016 to a fairly lukewarm reception. It looked the part with sleek Swedish lines and certainly offered some great features including, of course, a true 50MP sensor to deliver stunning medium format quality. It was aimed at the prosumer market and, with a price tag at a snip under £6000 for the body alone, it was clearly the wealthy prosumer they were after.

The X1D was one of those cameras that you really wanted to be great but just wasn't. Experienced photographers are savvy enough to see through the 50MP seduction and just were not impressed enough by some of the compromises Hasselblad had made to achieve the 'everyman' goal. Most of all it was slow - too slow - and that meant it was just too difficult to use in most real life scenarios.

Meet the Successor

All of this means that the X1D II 50C has some heavy responsibilities placed on its shoulders. Hasselblad handed me one body plus an XCD 90mm f/3.2, a XCD 21mm f/4 and the brand new XCD 45P f/4. Together with a spare battery and charger, this kit fitted neatly into a 15x11 inch flight case with

ABOVE: Richard found the medium format Hasselblad easy to handle thanks to its ultra compact size.

absolutely bags of room to spare.

The X1D II 50C is small: in fact, despite its medium format credentials, it's as small as my mirrorless Sony a7R III, which makes it smaller than most DSLRs, so it really is a portable camera kit. On top of that it just feels just so good in the hand. The deep set grip forms an integral part of a body that's honed from a solid chunk of aluminium. The whole thing feels solid as a rock.

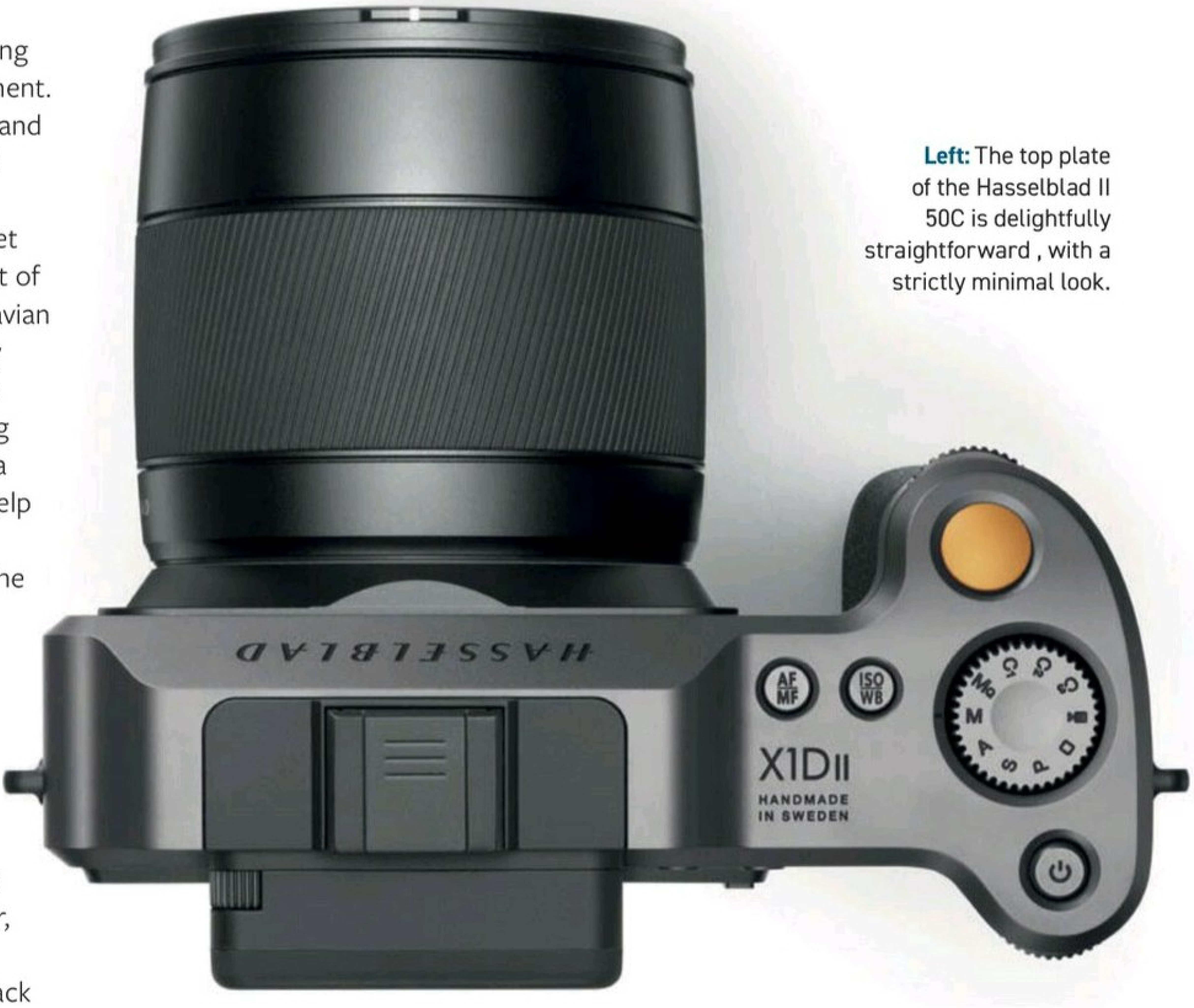
When I first plucked the camera from its case I was disappointed that Hasselblad had omitted to supply a strap with it, especially as I planned to take it for a walk. I took it with me on a weekend lifestyle shoot for Aston Martin down on the stunning />

Cowdray Park Estate in Midhurst, so long walks were a staple part of the assignment. In the end I carried the camera in my hand for a five mile yomp in the country and never once felt uncomfortable.

The body is light enough to carry, yet it's heavy enough to balance the weight of the leaf shutter lenses. This is Scandinavian design at its best. It feels good and boy does it look good. In fact I would go so far as to say that this is the best looking camera that I've ever handled: it's just a bloody gorgeous thing and you can't help but want to have it in your life!

Next on the reviewer's to do list is the user interface. The X1D II 50 differs from its predecessor only in the fact that it's finished in gun metal grey as opposed to silver and this looks very special. The new model is a millimetre or so taller than the original, accounted for by the handy inclusion of built in Wi-Fi and GPS. The grip fabric is also upgraded for a better, more assured feel.

You are immediately struck by the lack



Left: The top plate of the Hasselblad II 50C is delightfully straightforward , with a strictly minimal look.

BELOW: Richard took the new Hasselblad with him to tackle a lifestyle shoot for Aston Martin.

of confusing dials and knobs on the camera. The buttons are so minimal that you can't believe they are capable of doing their job. The mode dial rises at first touch and can then be pushed firmly down to lock your settings. You have to ask yourself why don't all cameras do this? The three other top buttons: handle On/Off, AF/MF and ISO/WB. Get the idea? It's just so simple. The shutter button is finished in a metallic copper and the effect is like no other camera.

In the Hands

The X1D II 50 has an enormous 3.6in fixed viewing screen, a full 0.6 inches larger than the original X1D which, let's face it, was not a tiny screen to start with. There's a line of buttons down the right side of the screen and two above it and all are easily accessible and ergonomically placed.

The touch screen is probably the best one that I've ever experienced on a camera. Using the type of responsive menus and sub menus that are familiar to anyone owning an iPhone or Android smartphone, the 24 bit 2.36 million dot screen does a wonderful job. There is no perceivable touch screen lag and menus are so logical that you can pick this camera up, make any adjustment you wish and just start using it. It's that simple! The viewfinder is clear and crisp with a 100% viewing area displayed with a 3.69 million dot OLED. So far so good!

Lenses are well balanced and easy to slide on and off the mount, although I would have placed the lens release button on the right hand side of the body not the left as it means you have to take the camera out of your holding hand before changing lenses. Ok, so it's a minor point but then again this is something I love about my Sony.

BELOW: The gorgeous lines of the Aston Martin perfectly captured in bitingly sharp medium format.

> "The touch screen is probably the best one that I've ever experienced on a camera. Using the type of responsive menus and sub menus that are familiar to anyone owning an iPhone or Android smartphone, the 24 bit 2.36 million dot screen does a wonderful job."

There are currently nine dedicated XCD lenses available and the three that I had were all stunning. Built with internal leaf shutters, these lenses can sync with any flash up to 1/2000sec. Remember that means no power loss and no need to use HSS or HyperSync flash units, just the simplicity of plug and play when required.

The new 45P f/4 lens differs from the existing 45mm f/3.5 lens by dint of being considerably smaller and lighter in weight. It claims, in fact, to be the lightest medium format lens in the world and I wouldn't doubt that. It's the perfect 'one lens' companion for the traveller, a compact, mid-sized wide angle optic that's the equivalent of a 35mm on a standard DSLR. There are currently ten lenses in the system, from 21mm through to 135mm with one zoom at 35-75mm. If you want to access the vast range of H mount lenses in the long running Hasselblad range then there is an adapter available as well, so the sky's the limit and the quality is never an issue.

The camera does not currently support video but it will do as soon as the Swedish geeks have got time to start 'algorithming' and, in any case, I don't see this camera as particularly being a videographer's choice so I'm not holding my breath. Two UHS-II SD card slots are on board, which can be arranged with the normal options of shooting Raw and/or large format JPEGs at up to 2.7fps. It can also be easily tethered with any Mac or PC option.

Start Up Time

When I first switched the camera on I was keen to see how long it took to boot up. The previous model took something equivalent to an average insect's life span to get />

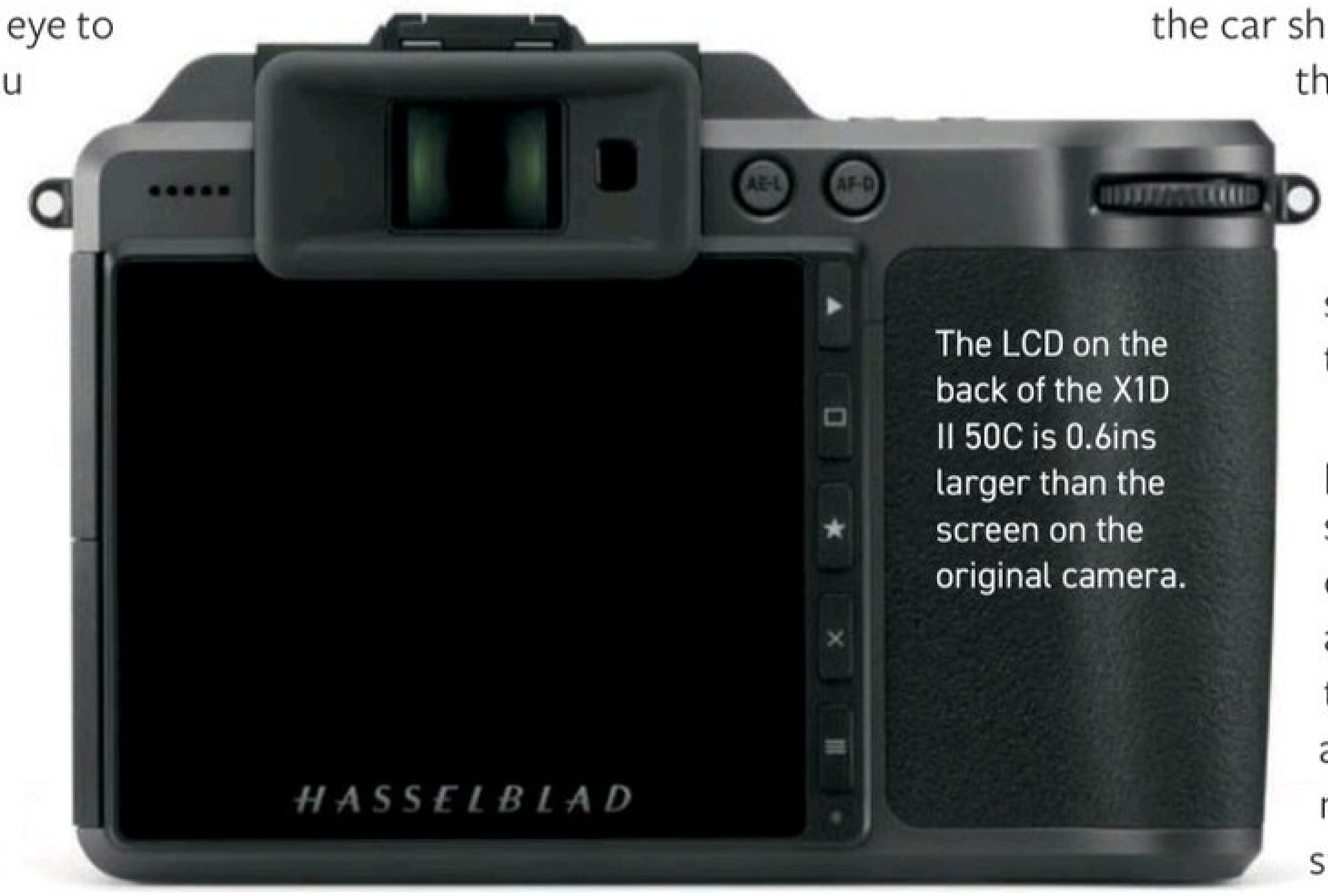
LEFT: Richard also found the camera very suitable for shooting informal portraits.

going, so the mere four seconds that the X1D II 50 takes to spark into life felt almost Usain Bolt-like. It's still a lot slower than your average DSLR or Mirrorless camera but it didn't feel intrusive.

Focusing options for the camera are limited but for the most part adequate in terms of screen coverage, with up to 117 selectable autofocus points. Hasselblad has chosen to use contrast detection only with no phase detection, which is accurate but it does tend to take its time.

It has to be said that I did find the focus searching on this camera rather annoying. It felt at times like some of the older, cheaper lenses I bought for my Canon system nearly ten years ago. The focusing seems better than on the original model but, to my mind, it's still not up to where it should be.

There are no focus assist modes, so you have Auto Focus and Manual Focus and that's it. A very handy feature though is the fact that the viewing screen does not switch off when you put your eye to the viewfinder. This means you can use your thumb on the touch screen to position the focus selection point whilst looking through the viewfinder. It's a new experience but one that you soon get used to: I liked it!



The LCD on the back of the X1D II 50C is 0.6ins larger than the screen on the original camera.

The Shoot

There were essentially two parts to my shoot. A lifestyle element whilst walking around the beautiful Sussex countryside and then the car shoot itself at Cowdray Hall on the Cowdray Park Estate. It was an informal weekend so I had my wife and son with me along with a group of friends, so there were plenty of options to try out the camera.

The Hasselblad was a pleasure to carry around and setting up individual shots was easy. The viewfinder is clear and the camera is so natural in the hand. If your subject is still and willing to pose then there's no problem. The moment they start to move around, however, you realise the limitations of the old style focusing. It's restrictive and there is no way around that. Strangely enough I found it a little bit liberating, as I'm old enough to have spent most of my professional career shooting with film cameras using manual only or fixed autofocus, and it brought back memories of pre-focused running shots to get the action images that you wanted.

The second half of the day demonstrated the type of shoot that, in my opinion, this camera was designed for. With James Bond's Aston Martin parked up outside Cowdray Hall I had the camera, a tripod and one large bounce reflector.

The sun was going down so I had to work quickly. I shot with the camera on a tripod for perfect set-ups that were aligned precisely, and I was shooting at up to 1/15sec at around f/16 to get ISO

RIGHT: Impromptu shots with the camera were a little more challenging and required old school pre-focusing.

SPECIFICATIONS

Hasselblad X1D II 50C

PRICE: £5400

SENSOR: 50MP Medium Format CMOS

ISO RANGE: 100-25,600

MOUNT: Hasselblad X Mount

MEMORY CARDS: Dual UHS-II SD cards or tethered to Mac or PC. SD Cards can be used in Overflow or Backup mode. Max 1 TB. High Speed UHS-II cards are recommended.

METERING SYSTEM: Spot, Centre Weighted and Centre Spot.

SCREEN RESOLUTION: 236,000 pixels

SHUTTER SPEEDS: 1/2000sec to 68 mins.

EXPOSURE MODES: Single Shot, Continuous, Self-Timer, Interval Timer and Exposure Bracketing.

FILE FORMATS: Hasselblad 3FR Raw, Full size JPEGs.

CONNECTIVITY: USB 3.0 (5 Gbit/s) Type-C connect

100 pin sharp imagery. I was then able to take the camera off the tripod for a spell, shooting at ISO 400 hand held at 1/60-1/180sec for different angles and details, caught as the light was fading.

The 50MP sensor has a 14 stop dynamic range so the contrast of a sunset was easy to cope with. And the detail...Oh the detail! This sensor may be old but it was made to shoot cars. When I got the images back to the studio they allowed me so much leeway.

I often shoot cars with restricted kit, as lighting is not always an option. I frequently shoot images in multiple parts whilst using a tripod and then take the best from each frame to combine in post. In this case, showing the detail of two black alloy wheels needed a reflector positioned on one wheel, which was then moved to reflect on the other for the second frame. Putting the two captures together in Photoshop is easy, but the detail of each image was stunning. I also like to push up the contrast by adding a black and white soft light layer to accentuate the blacks. This technique means I usually shoot for lower contrast in the original capture, but with the 'Blad I kept it as seen. The results were fabulous and there was no need for adjustments. PP

More information:
/ **www.hasselblad.com**

HASSELBLAD
H
4/45
Ø62mm

The smooth lines of the Hasselblad mark it out as a model that has definite supermodel appeal.

> "The second half of the day demonstrated the type of shoot that this camera is designed for. With James Bond's Aston Martin parked up outside Cowdray Hall I had the camera, a tripod and one large bounce reflector with me."

VERDICT

I CAN TELL YOU that this photographer thinks the Hasselblad X1D II 50C is a fabulous camera. The price of the body has been reduced down to £5399 making it considerably less expensive than its predecessor but it still works out at £900 more expensive than the Fujifilm GFX 50S and a stonking £1900 more than the 61MP Sony a7R IV.

The native lens range is also smaller than the competition but all the lenses are leaf shutter so much more suited to professional flash options with zero power loss even with high shutter speed combinations. The X1D II can also be coupled up to the entire H series lens range with the addition of an adapter and there can't be many camera makers that have a larger medium format lens range than Hasselblad.

The camera is small and beautifully balanced and also happens to look like a supermodel so it's difficult not to enjoy being around it. At its new price point – which it probably had to drop down to if it was going to remain competitive - it's going to be a tempting proposition

However, if you're looking for an all-round run-and-gun camera for every purpose this is not the camera for you. Some photographers, in my opinion, will never quite get the X1D II. They will criticise it for slow focusing and a lack of multiple features with a price tag that many would say is at the point where it should include everything.

Others like me can see what Hasselblad has done here. If you want a camera to shoot calm considered images like landscapes, interiors, posed portraits and commercial still life in studio or on location with leaf shutter lenses requiring no in-camera stabilisation with full power flash at any sync speed there is simply no better model available at this price point. The ease of use, the astonishing lens quality and that gorgeous 50MP sensor giving a dynamic range to rival any sensor that I've ever used will provide professional image quality time and time again.

Take a look at the specifications for the Aston Martin DBS Superleggera. It has a 0-60 time of 3.7 seconds and a price tag to match. For a lot less money it's possible to buy yourself a Toyota GR Supra 3.0 Pro with very similar performance and still afford to get all the options fitted and additionally buy dinner for all your Toyota Car club mates. But which would you rather have parked outside on your driveway?

elinchrom
ELC500

Elinchrom has just unveiled its latest line up of powerful and compact mains-operated studio lights. Richard Bradbury got hands-on pre-launch to see what they've got to offer the professional user.

TESTED

Elinchrom ELC

WORDS AND IMAGES RICHARD BRADBURY

OVER 30 YEARS AGO NOW I set up my first London-based – well, Croydon anyhow - studio and as part of the deal I inherited some Elinchrom lighting from the previous owner and bought a bunch more 2000ws and 4000ws packs and several heads to set myself up. Astonishingly I still have that same head to pack gear now and it's never failed me in all that time.

That is the kind of long term lighting review that you simply could never organise but it's made me a lifelong Elinchrom fan. A short while back I reviewed the incredible ELB500 TTL units for this magazine, which are Elinchrom's battery powered location lights. I've used them and the 1200ws units on many location assignments in all parts of the world. They are superb work horses so I was particularly interested to test the latest ELC range of studio lights – freshly launched this spring - from the Swiss manufacturer.

The ELC 125 and 500 units are well priced at £479 and £699 respectively and they are designed to replace the current BRX 250 and 500ws lights in the Elinchrom range. They are small to mid-sized monobloc units, which are mains powered so they're designed for the studio or for occasional indoor location shoots. Currently the Elinchrom D-Lites are the go-to units for the first time, price conscious user, but these latest products offer a whole lot more than either the D-Lites or the BRX and bring this part of the Elinchrom range well and truly up to date.

Well Designed

The first thing you notice about the ELCs is that they are compact and well put together. The clean ergonomic design features a large, user-friendly handle on top and you get the feeling that dropping one would not necessarily be a terminal tragedy. These types of lights tend to get a lot of usage and many will be taken out of the studio, so they have to be tough. A nice touch is the fact that the control area at the rear of the light is inset with a strong quarter inch skirt to protect them. This means that if they do hit the ground there should be no broken dials or buttons.

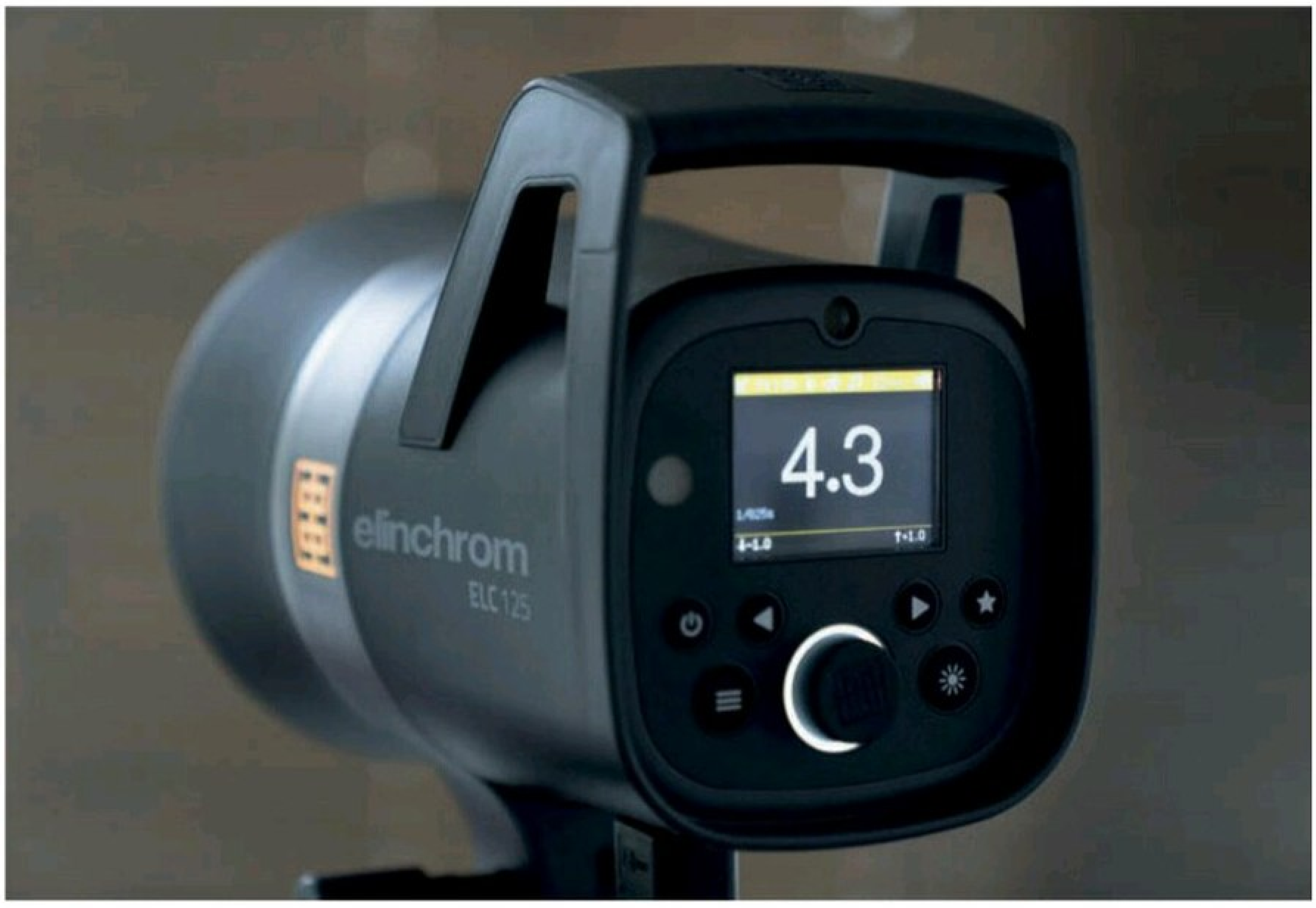
One feature that's always annoyed me about Elinchrom lights is the light shaper connection method, but I'm pleased to see that they have finally addressed this to some degree at least. The older units required you to connect the shaper with a bayonet fitting then secure it with a circular locking ring. This was awkward to use and frankly just not a good solution. The new units have replaced the ring with a neat one-touch slider on top of the light that clearly shows if it's locked or unlocked: finally!

Both the 125 and the 500ws lights are packed with technical features and

elinchrom
ELC 125

125/500

ABOVE: The 125 and 500 heads from Elinchrom are small to mid sized monobloc units.



ABOVE: Both of the new mains powered heads feature a highly intuitive menu system and if you've used Elinchrom lights before then you'll already be entirely familiar with the ELC system's controls.

accessing them is really simple. Elinchrom has done an amazing job over the past few years of integrating all their units, both studio and location based. The menu system is, in my opinion, one of the best on the market, mainly because it's just so intuitive. This means that if you've bought any Elinchrom lights over the past five years you'll be entirely familiar with the ELC's controls. If you're new to the fold then if you set up the lights after breakfast you can rest assured that they'll be second nature by early brunch. In addition to the menu the actual control buttons feel solid and very Swiss. Dominated by a central dial, the buttons are minimalistic and again you'll find them very easy to understand.

TTL has become a standard feature on just about every Elinchrom light now. It seems like it has become as normal as heated seats and Sat Nav in your car.

It's easy to forget that, until Profoto's />

SPECIFICATIONS

Elinchrom ELC 125 and 500 Studio Lights

COST: ELC 125: £479/ELC 500: £699

TTL/HSS: Yes (w/Transmitter Pro)

FLASH MODES: Action On: Faster flash durations. Action Off: Optimised colour temperature

LED MODELLING LAMP: Daylight 20W 92 CRI LED / equivalent to 120W

POWER INCREMENTS, MANUAL / TTL MODE: 0.1 F-stop / 0.3 F-stop

AUTO POWER DUMPING: Adjusts power settings automatically in real time

FAN COOLED: Yes (Smart Pro-Active Cooling)

SKYPORT: (built-in) 20 freq., 4 Groups, TTL and Manual

VOLTAGE: Multivoltage: AC 100-240V

UMBRELLA FITTING: Centred Umbrella Fitting 7-8 mm

ELC 125

POWER RANGE: 7 - 131 Ws (5 F-stops)

COLOUR STABILITY OVER THE POWER RANGE: +/- 150 K

BEST FLASH DURATION: t0.1 1/7750 s

RECYCLING TIME: 230V 0.06 - 0.45 s.

RECYCLING TIME: 120V 0.1 - 0.8 s.

DIMENSIONS: LxWxH (w/protective cap) 23.0 x 16.7 x 26.30 cm

WEIGHT: 2 kg

ELC 500

POWER RANGE: 7 - 522 Ws (7 F-stops)

COLOUR STABILITY OVER THE POWER RANGE: +/- 200 K

BEST FLASH DURATION: t0.1 1/9430 s

RECYCLING TIME: 230V 0.06 - 1.1 s.

RECYCLING TIME: 120V 0.09 - 1.9 s.

DIMENSIONS: LxWxH (w/protective cap) 28.0 x 16.7 x 26.3 cm

WEIGHT: 2.5 kg

elinchrom
ELC500
4.3

ABOVE: Beautiful lines and an Elinchrom symbol on the side of the unit that lights up as you change the group.

fabled B1 lights were launched back in 2013, TTL could only be found on Speedlites. Elinchrom has truly mastered the dark art of TTL and you can now set the lights up with TTL if you're in a hurry and then save the setting to enable you to manually adjust each light to suit. TTL is not for everyone but with the 125 units being very suitable for beginners and semi-professional photographers it's a very useful feature.

The ELCs can be controlled by all of the Elinchrom transmitters, with the fabulous Skyport Plus HS transceiver being the weapon of choice. If you haven't used one then again the Skyport's menus are easy to understand, offering every facility you need for single or multi-unit control. Skyports are available for all major camera brands including Panasonic, Olympus and Pentax, so you'll easily be able to find the right transmitter to suit your camera.

Hi Speed Synch

It's great to see Hi Speed Synch modes being included in the ELC units, as it's a really useful feature for shooting beyond the camera's maximum synch speed, for mixing light sources or even just for reducing power to create beautiful bokeh effects. Elinchrom has toyed with various methods of high speed capture in the past but, to my mind, HSS is the best option. Some of the company's current lights, such as the ELB 1200 battery units, have Hi-Sync rather than Hi Speed Sync, with the claim that more of the flash power is usable with this method. However, HSS is definitely simpler to use, requiring no calibration to set it up. Usefully both the 125 and 500 can be sync'd at shutter speeds up to 1/8000sec with any focal plane shutter. When I've tested different units from other manufacturers using both methods I have to say that the drop off in power was very similar, so I think the technology is definitely starting to favour HSS.

In addition to this the ELCs have an 'Action' setting, which is designed to give super-fast flash duration rather than synch speed. The 125 offers flash speeds up to 1/7750sec and the 500 a blistering 1/9430sec. This means that ghosting with moving studio subjects, such as dancing people, will never be an issue and water droplets will be pin sharp every time.

BELOW: Controls on the back of the units are simple to come to terms with and are mainly controlled by a single large knob.

The ELCs offer more than enough channels and groups for any busy studio environment but they also have a unique feature that I just loved. The neat Elinchrom logo on the side of every unit lights up when switched on, but look again! As you change the group the logo changes colour...brilliant! From a distance it can be difficult to check which light is in which group, so you're never quite sure what you're adjusting with your Skyport. The coloured indicator lights, however, make it simple to keep track and it's difficult to imagine an easier, more effective group feature than this.

Integrated System

I mentioned earlier that Elinchrom has gone to great lengths over the past few years to integrate all of its flash lighting systems. The most evident incarnation of this concept

ABOVE: The new ELC lights are a great choice for a wide range of professional work in the studio.

ELINCHROM ELC 125 AND ELC 500 STUDIO LIGHTS

THE FLASH FIGURES shown here demonstrate that the 125 and 500 units are consistent with each other at the same power output up to +/- 0.2 stops, which is effectively imperceptible as a variable. All the lights were completely consistent in their output, flash after flash reading exactly the same.

I also measured each light individually. When measured at one stop power increments both lights were completely accurate at the lower power settings. At higher powers the ELC 125 demonstrated a variation of up to 0.2 stops from one stop to another and the ELC 500 was even more accurate varying by only 0.1 stop.

FLASH CONSISTENCY FIGURES MEASURES AT TEN FEET

Power Setting	F-stop reading		
	ELC 125	ELC 500	
6.3		f/22.3	
5.3		f/16.4	
4.3	f/11.6	f/11.5	(-0.1)
3.3	f /8.5	f/8.6	(+0.1)
2.3	f/5,6.6	f/5,6.6	
1.3	f /4.8	f/4.6	(-0.2)
0.3	f/2,8.8	f/2,8.6	(-0.2)

is the way that the company has chosen to number the power output of each and every light, whatever system you're using across the range, according to its correct power output. The clear digital readout gives you the relevant power number.

What this means is that the numbers at the high end are different for the 125 and the 500 units. This is because all Elinchrom lights show the power output according to the actual amount of power in each unit, so they can be mixed and matched showing the correct readings on each light no matter which units you're using together on set. This feature is present right across the Elinchrom range, so you can use the ELC 125 together with an ELB 1200 locations pack and they will be calibrated together.

The ELC 125 can be powered up to a power rating of 4.3 with 7ws-131ws, whilst the 500 goes up further to 6.3 with 7ws-522ws. Both units can be adjusted in 1/10th increments and feature the latest Elinchrom Smart Pro-Active cooling to keep everything safe and working all day long.

I tested both units extensively for power and accuracy and the findings were very good. Take a look at the power table above and you'll see that the output of both lights was very consistent. They didn't waver, flash after flash, giving exactly the same readings. It's worth noting both units were accurate in one stop readings to within a 2/10th stop.

The same was true when comparing the 125 unit to the 500 unit to see if their power read outs were accurately calibrated across the two different lights. Once again the same power output from each light varied by only 2/10th stop at the most. In real world terms two tenths of a stop is completely imperceptible, so they were both more than up to the job. PP

VERDICT

SO HOW GOOD are these lights and who should be using them? Well, there are several obvious candidates. Firstly anyone who has a BRX kit and is feeling like they are in need of an update will certainly not be disappointed. The ELCs are in a different league in terms of facilities and ease of operation, making them an obvious and very justifiable change for the better.

In the open market there are few lights that come close to the ELCs within their price bracket, so for the starter professional or discerning hobbyist wanting a quality unit the 125s offer enough power for home baby shoots, small table tops and simple portraits. When you want a bit more the 500 units ensure a two stop leap in power, which should be more than enough for most light industrial and interior office set ups, as well as the basis for a no compromise portrait or small commercial studio.

Finally, if you have bigger aspirations, the 125s and the 500s are a great way to add to your existing 1200 or 2400ws Digital RX power packs or to mix with the 1000ws ELC Pro HD monoblocs. In this way they can add a punch of light to a room set or complex fashion shoot. They provide a versatile solution when mixed or used independently and the entire range of Elinchrom softboxes and light shapers will fit every Elinchrom unit large and small, new and old.

After what seemed like a long time standing still, Elinchrom has been very proactive over the past few years. The company has been quietly updating and improving all of its ranges and has produced some of the most outstanding professional lighting systems on the market. The ELC 125 and 500 are a welcome replacement for the low to mid-range studio shooter. Packed with contemporary features and built to withstand the rigors of the studio, these lights are the perfect professional choice. I'll let you know how they're doing if you come back to me in another thirty years.

More information:
/ www.elinchrom.com

Pro Quality

Gimbal technology has come on in leaps and bounds in recent years and prices have plunged at the same time. Here we're looking at two very affordable options from DJI and Zhiyun. **WORDS** MATTY GRAHAM/TERRY HOPE

WWW.DJI.COM

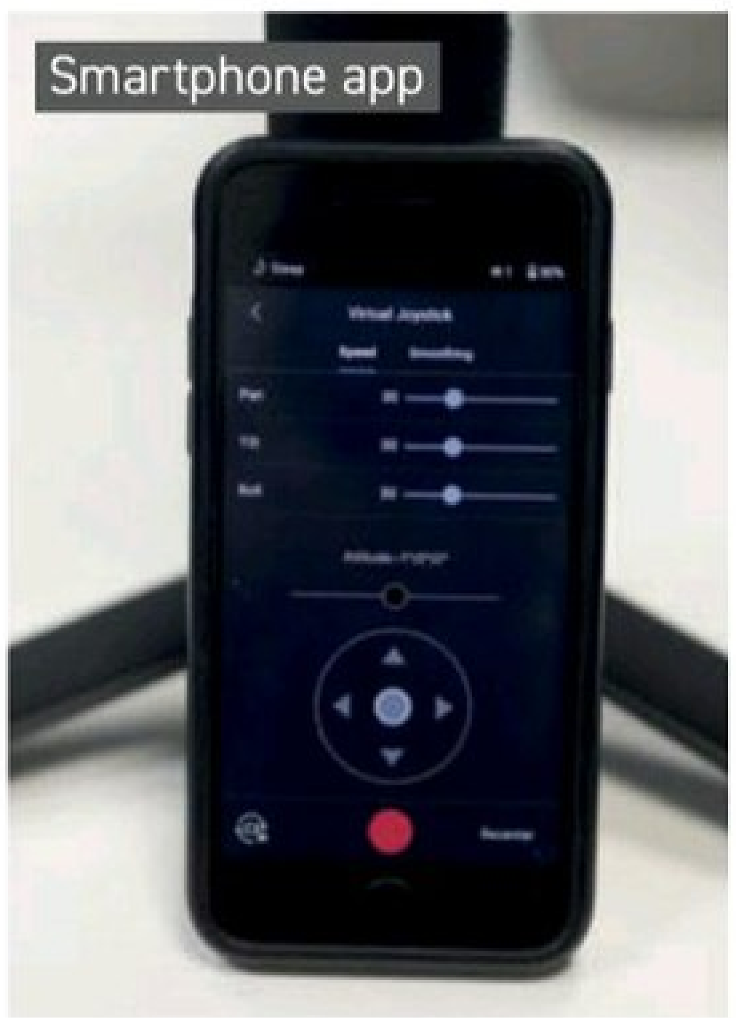
DJI Ronin SC

PRICE: £325 OR £415 FOR THE PRO COMBO KIT

A FEW YEARS BACK aspiring professionals had to sell an organ or take out a huge loan to afford an effective gimbal setup. Fast forward to today and you can pick up the DJI Ronin SC for just £325 - a too-good-to-be-true price-tag for a piece of kit that will really help you ramp up the production values of your video footage.

It's true that, actually, there's never been a better time to buy a gimbal set up and there's something special about the SC, which is why I spent my own money on it. The little brother to the larger main Ronin gimbal is perfect for pairing with smaller mirrorless cameras, such as the Sony a6300, which is the unit I use for B-roll in my footage, or the Nikon Z 50, which I have been testing lately. That said, with a maximum payload of 2kg, I have also used the SC with a Canon 90D, paired with a small prime 24mm optic - a set up that's perfect for run-and-gun capture.

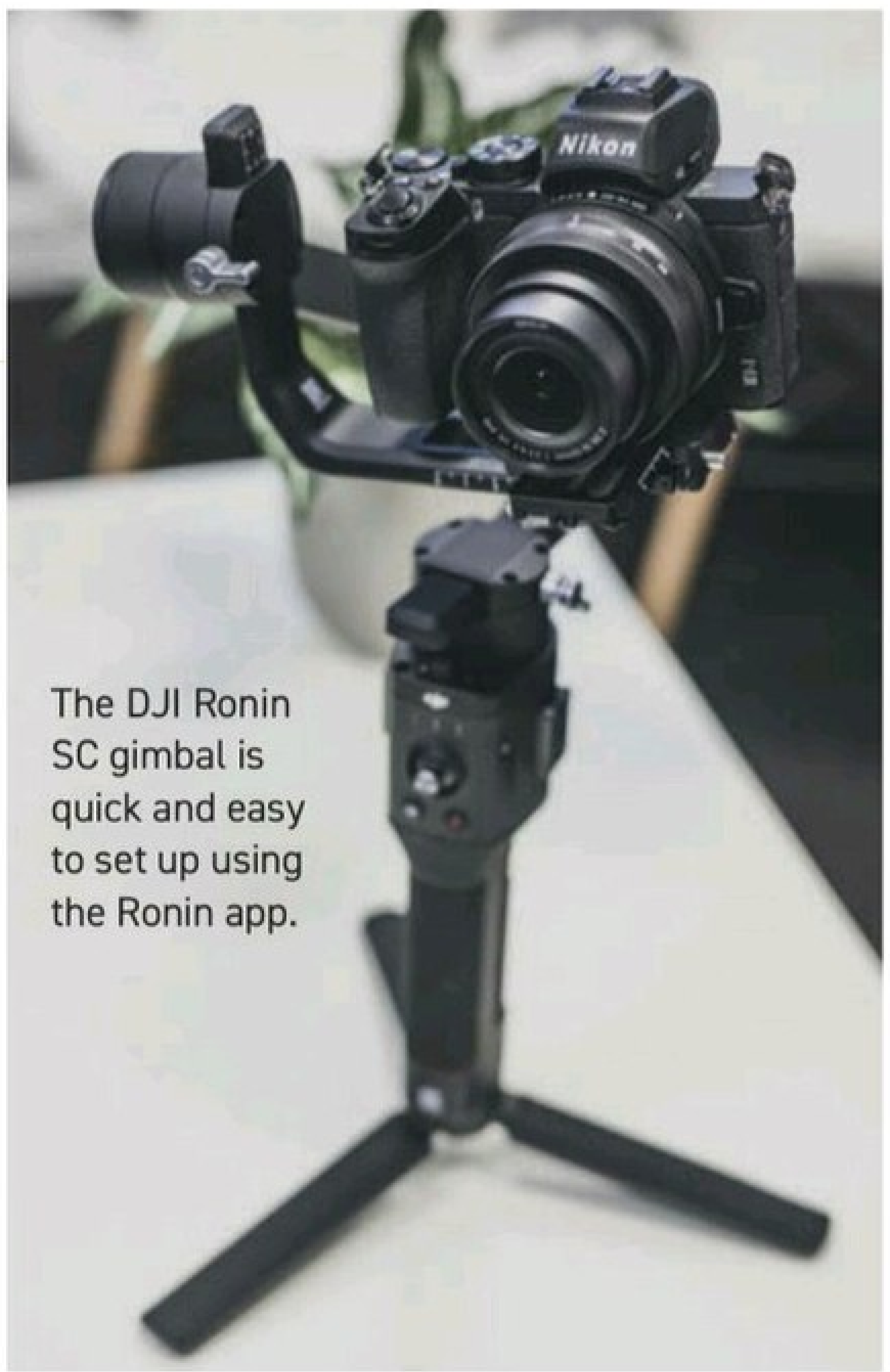
Arriving in a protective carry case, the three-axis motorised gimbal boasts a tiny form factor, and tips the scales at just over 1kg, making it 41% lighter than the Ronin S. Although the axis arms lock, I haven't been keen to pack it straight into a rucksack; with all the additional parts, such as the tripod-style mounting plate and the battery handle, I prefer to keep the kit together as one in that useful carry case.



Smartphone app

Setting up the unit is easy: you just download the free DJI Ronin app, which is the gateway to using the gimbal remotely. The app lets you balance test to calibrate the gimbal once the camera has been fitted, but it also enables the operator to use their smartphone as a virtual joystick and follow subjects around the scene with ease. For those seeking more creative applications, the app will even help capture panorama and time lapse sequences - all of which can be pre-planned precisely using the app. For a more hands-on approach, you can choose to simply use the joystick on the actual gimbal and this reacts to touch nicely - even those who are new to gimbals should be able to quickly get the hang of moving the camera around via the joystick easily.

The battery, which is charged up via a USB-C connection, is good for up to 11 hours of operation, which means you won't have to worry about the unit running out of power out on location. Even if it does, just plug in a powerbank and you'll be good to go. Most dealers offer the Pro Combo option, which adds a focus wheel to the bundle, but the standard gimbal was good enough for me - especially when most mirrorless cameras now have touch screens to establish focus. The Ronin SC is also eligible for DJI's Care Refresh offer, so you can choose to pay around £50 and this covers you for up to two replacement units within one year - that's some good aftersales action! **MG**



The DJI Ronin SC gimbal is quick and easy to set up using the Ronin app.

Carry case

VERDICT

BIG ON FEATURES, small on size, the Ronin SC is the perfect gimbal for those using lightweight mirrorless cameras and benefits amazingly from that low price-point. Yes, you're limited to 2kg of payload, but in today's world of lightweight mirrorless models, that's plenty. The app works seamlessly and connects every time without fuss. The stabilisation is impressive and the SC will undoubtedly improve your production values.

Gimbals

AS FILMMAKING HAS become more prevalent amongst photographers so gimbals have become accessories that are of interest, with their ability to free up the videographer to follow the action while still producing rock solid footage. The early versions were expensive and complicated to set up, but all of that has changed and here are two models that should be of interest to every pro looking to get involved in video production.

WWW.ZHIYUN-TECH.COM

Zhiyun Weebill-S

PRICE: £299

I WAS LOOKING FORWARD to trying out the Weebill-S – if you need to know it's named after Australia's smallest bird, apparently – and Zhiyun is an interesting company that obviously has a bit of a thing about gimbals, having launched no fewer than 15 different models since 2014.

This was the first one that I've tried out, however, and I have to say that I was impressed with what's on offer at a very keen price. Like its DJI rival the product comes in a lightweight but fairly solid feeling protective case, and it would make sense to store it in this for travel.

There are latches on each of the gimbal's three axis, and these are easy to lock on and off. There are some serious advantages to this: first of all, when you're balancing the gimbal with the camera in position, you can unlock each axis at a time and only move on to the next stage once you're happy everything is set up. The very first time I used this gimbal I screwed in the supplied set of mini tripod feet so that the device sat on my desk and I was able to have it all done and ready for action in around ten minutes and I would definitely get this down to just a minute or two once I was more familiar with everything. The other good thing about having axis that lock is that it's feasible to carry the gimbal with the camera in place from job to job, saving the time and effort of a re-balancing exercise each time.

Smartphone app

Protective case

I also liked the fact that the kit comes with a set of two-in-one quick release plates in the Manfrotto/Arca Swiss style, so again this enables the camera to be removed without having to go through the entire re-balancing exercise again. There's also a riser plate included, so you can lift the camera up a fraction if it's fitted with a particularly oversized piece of glass.

All of the gimbal's controls are on the handle and, while these are a little fiddly if you have sausage fingers like me, you soon get used to them and these give you access to the speed and various parameters of each axis and you can also set a number of different stabiliser modes, ranging from Pan Following through to Locking, where all three axis are fixed to keep the camera aiming in a single shooting direction. There are lots of choices presented and it's just a case of getting your head around what's on offer.

Zhiyun seems a little coy about the actual weight that the Weebill-S can accomodate and I couldn't find this information anywhere, which is strange because it's perfectly capable of managing most of the mirrorless and DSLR cameras that you're likely to want to work with, such as the Sony a7 III with an FE 24-70mm f/2.8 or the heavier Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with an EF 24-70mm f/2.8. There's a function called Intelligent Auto Tune on board, allowing the Weebill-S to automatically recognise the weight of the outfit you're working with and auto tune its power to best adapt the camera setup.

The handy screw-in tripod feet allow the gimbal to be free standing when required.

Like DJI's Ronin, you get the most out of the Weebill-S by downloading the ZY Play app and this connected seamlessly and gave access to a whole host of remote functions. With the gimbal sitting on its feet you can tilt the camera in any direction you like by moving your smartphone, and I can see a whole host of advantages to this once you're fully conversant with it. **TH**

VERDICT

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED with this piece of kit and it's priced at a point where those looking at video production can afford to take a punt to see what gimbals can offer. It's easy enough to get to grips with, but I have to say that the font size in the instruction book is amongst the smallest I've ever come across and ultimately I set the product up by watching one of the many excellent Zhiyun-sponsored training films that can be found on YouTube.

elinchrom
ELC 125 TTL / ELC 500 TTL
Built For Your Daily Adventure.

©Emily Teague

Ready. Play. Create.

The NEW ELC 125 / 500's are modern compacts built to handle your next adverture reliably & consistently. Featuring TTL with Manual Lock, HSS, Smart Pro-Active Cooling, Auto-On, dimmable daylight LED modelling lamp, colour coded grouping & direct compatibility with Elinchrom's world-renowned light modifiers.

Prices from £479 with 3 Year Warranty.

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www.theflashcentre.com

MINI**TEST**

GREAT NEW KIT HEADING YOUR WAY

WORDS MATTY GRAHAM

WWW.TAMRON.EU

Tamron 20mm f/2.8 Di III M 1:2

PRICE: £399

SONY'S ASCENT IN the mirrorless camera market has been nothing short of spectacular, but those using the system will be the first to admit that, while the bodies are packed with cutting edge tech, the downside is the price of the brand's lenses.

One solution could be Tamron's 20mm f/2.8 Di III M 1:2 - a budget-friendly prime wide-angle that delivers a fast maximum aperture and a versatile focal length without breaking the bank. At 20mm, the lens is suitable for landscape, street, travel, wedding and architecture photography when used with a full-frame Sony E-mount camera. Pair the optic with a APS-C crop-sensor body like the a6300, meanwhile, and the effective focal length switches up to 30mm, making the lens suitable for wider angle portraits too. So, this lens for all seasons should find a perfect home for most photographers out there but what other reasons are there to buy it?

Well, first up, this lens is ultra light and compact, tipping the scales at just 220g. Because of these tiny dimensions, the Tamron 20mm is a perfect choice for photographers who want to travel light, or have little space to spare in their bags. What's more, videographers who use their Sony camera on a gimbal such as the Ronin SC or Zhiyun Weebill S, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, will find the Tamron an absolute pleasure to work with as it balances well with both the full-frame a7R IV and the crop-sensor a6300 that I tested the optic with.

TAMRON
20mm F/2.8
Di III OSD M1:2

Image quality from the Tamron lens is good and any curvature distortion can be controlled via the built-in digital lens correction feature, which is more evident when shooting landscapes with far-off horizons in the background. The fast maximum aperture of f/2.8 enables photographers to not only create very shallow depths of field, but also maintain fast shutter speeds in low light conditions - an attractive feature for street photographers, who often don't have access to additional artificial lighting.

While unable to match the 1:1 ratio you'd find on a macro lens, the Tamron does offer a 1:2 reproduction scale that, when paired with the lens' 11cm minimum focusing distance range, will allow users to capture close up imagery with ease. Despite the small size of the lens, the Tamron 20mm features a typical filter thread size of 67mm, meaning even if you have to buy a step-up ring, you should be able to use most existing filters – in fact the 20mm shares the same 67mm filter thread as Tamron's 28-75mm RXD and 17-28mm zoom lenses.

Lastly, you can't review this lens without mentioning the impressive price-tag and £399 is very competitive - for comparison, the Sony 24mm f/1.8 ZA Carl Zeiss Sonnar T* is priced at around £800.

VERDICT

A value for money optic that provides good image quality and a very versatile focal length. Small, lightweight dimensions add to this lens' appeal, further extending its reach to filmmakers as well as stills shooters. Pro photographers who shoot a lot of close-up imagery will also find a friend in this lens and the price tag is simply hard to beat.

Things I wish I'd known...

© SUSIE LAWRENCE

Carolyn Mendelsohn

Looking back at her life, Carolyn muses over the numbers of photographers in her family and advises her younger self to trust her instincts and to always have faith in her work.

WHEN I RECALL my earliest images of childhood, I see myself at the age of five, standing quietly in front of a framed print entranced by a photograph taken by my great uncle Emil. A beautiful framed print of a forest shrouded in mist, with a tiny figure in the background. I would spend hours lost in this picture, drawn in and imagining myself there.

My family tree is densely populated with a variety of photographers: some were professionals while others just keen enthusiasts. Every moment of my life was carefuly documented and the prints then lovingly put into photograph albums. Due to my contrary nature, I therefore determined never to be a photographer. Looking back I do wish I had taken the time to talk more to the 'experts' in my own family.

My grandfather had a beautiful Leica; I didn't understand then what a wonderful film camera this is. If I could, I would have spent time talking to him about it, and if he had let me, I would have borrowed it and in all liklihood gone on to learn my craft much earlier.

When I had my children and was no longer able to travel about and work in theatre and film, as my career had dictated up until then. I felt very lost. One day - 15 years ago - I reticently picked up a camera because I needed something to do, in order to reconnect with my creative self. It felt so right in my hands. I started to eagerly learn all I could and document my family and our lives and the rest is my history. This tool liberated me, and I wish I had embraced it years earlier, rather than rejecting it.

I would tell my younger photographer self to loosen up and keep it simple! That a simple camera body is fine, that good lenses do help hugely, but mostly that you just need to really look at the picture before you press the button. Look through that viewfinder, breathe, take your time and don't panic. Also, I would tell her to appreciate those old family albums as physical memories you can hold in your hands, and please, please print your work too.

Don't rely on the affirmation of others, trust your instincts. Criticism can knock you sideways, particularly in this era of social media where it can feel as if your work is exposed to the cold gaze of myriad technical experts, gurus and geeks. Sometimes technical naivety and not knowing the rules can be a good thing: it frees you up and allows for a more creative approach.

I spent many hours worrying whether people would get tired of seeing my personal project, *Being Inbetween*. I was invited for a studio visit by a curator, in a wonderful contemporary photography gallery. I worried about what to present and prepared many different ideas, only to be told that they were only interested in my series because I had worked on it over a period of years. I felt a weight lifted from my shoulders; this knowledge liberated me. Good things take time; it's not a race. Keep faith in your own judgement, believe in what you're doing and stick with it!

/ www.carolynmendelsohnphoto.com

Carolyn's work has been exhibited internationally and has won many awards, including Portrait of Britain 2017/2019 and the prestigious RPS International Photography Exhibition, her portrait 'Alice' winning the gold medal. Her series 'Being Inbetween' has been shown in four solo exhibitions and is being exhibited at Impressions Gallery July-Sept 2020 and published as a book by Bluecoat Press.

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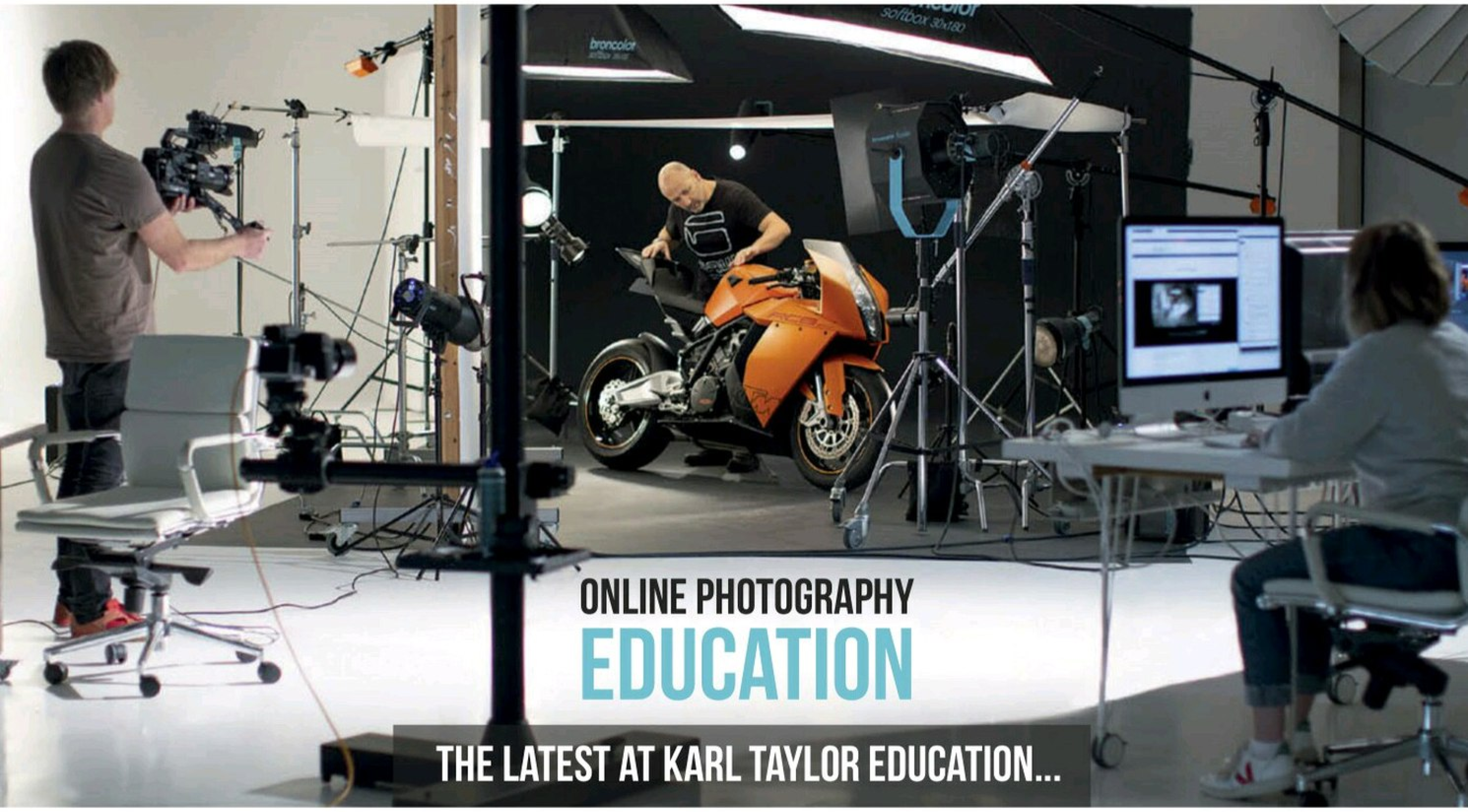

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During this class, the team had to battle some pretty intense weather conditions to create this epic shot, all whilst Karl explains the lighting setup and concept of the shoot.

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This hugely popular photoshoot was filmed live for our members and is now available on replay. Covering complex lighting techniques, this class is ideal for those looking for a challenge.

LIVE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS:

9TH APRIL 2020 - 18:00 GMT
MAGAZINE CHAT SHOW
WEBSITE CRITIQUE

Looking at our members' websites, Karl and his side-kick Ashleigh will be dicussing the do's and don'ts of curating and populating your website.

28TH APRIL 2020 - 18:00 GMT
LIVE MEMBERS IMAGE CRITIQUE
ANIMAL AND MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY

Members can enter images into regular live critique shows for Karl to review. In this next show Karl will look at animal and macro photography.

12TH MAY 2020 - 18:00 GMT
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